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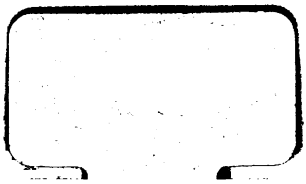

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NAS

Champney

WITCH WINNIE'S MYSTERY

WITCH WINNIE'S MYSTERY

OR

THE OLD OAK CABINET

THE STORY OF A KING'S DAUGHTER

BY

ELIZABETH W. CHAMPNEY

AUTHOR OF "WITCH WINNIE," "VASSAR GIRLS ABROAD," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. D. GIBSON AND J. WELLS CHAMPNEY.

NEW YORK

DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

[C 1891]

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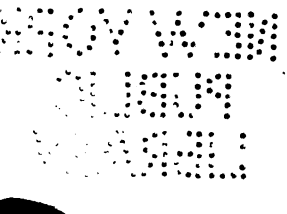

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INTRODUCTION.

For those who have not read the first volume of this series, "Witch Winnie, the Story of a King's Daughter."

We four girls,

Adelaide Armstrong,
Milly Roseveldt,
Emma Jane Anton,
Nellie Smith,

had been chums at boarding school.

(Let it here be explained that although my name is Nellie, I am never called anything but Tib by my friends.)

We occupied a little suite of apartments in the tower, consisting of a small study parlor from which opened two double bedrooms and one single one. Our family was called the Amen Corner, because our initials, arranged as an acrostic, spelled the word Amen, and because we were a set of little Pharisees, prigs, and "digs," not particularly admired by the rest of the school, but exceedingly virtuous

and preternaturally perfect in our own estimation.

This was our status at the beginning of our first school year together, and the change that came over us, owing to the introduction into our circle of Witch Winnie, the greatest scapegrace in the most mischief-making set of the school, the "Queen of the Hornets," has already been told. A quieting, earnest influence acted upon Winnie, and a natural, merry-hearted love of fun reacted on us, and we were all the better for the companionship.

The greatest practical result outside the change in our own characters was the formation, by the uniting of the "Amen Corner" and the "Hornets," of a Ten of King's Daughters, who founded the Home of the Elder Brother, for little children. This institution was adopted by our parents, who formed themselves into a board of managers, but left much of the working of the enterprise in our hands.* The Home prospered during the first year of its existence in a truly wonderful manner. It was undenominational and unendowed. No

* This Home is a truthful picture of one really founded by a band of little girls—the Messiah Home, at 4 Rutherford Place, Stuyvesant Square, New York, which is aided in its good work by different circles of King's Daughters.

rich church or wealthy man stood behind it. It was entirely dependent on the efforts of a few young girls, and on the voluntary subscriptions of benevolent people. But it grew day by day. Little ripples of influence widened out from our circle to others. During the vacation our ten separated, and at each of their homes they formed other tens, who worked for the same object. Every one who visited the Home was interested in its plan of work, which was to help the poor without pauperizing them ; to aid struggling women whose husbands had died, or were in hospitals or prisons, and who could have no homes of their own, by providing them with a substitute for the baby farming, so extensively carried on in the tenement districts, by offering them, on the same low terms, a sweet and wholesome shelter for their little ones. Some wondered why we charged these poor women anything; why the *half* charity was not made a free gift. But wiser philanthropists saw the superior kindness of this demand. The women whom we wished to aid were not beggars, but that worthy, struggling class who, overburdened, but still desperately striving, must sink in the conflict unless helped, but who still wished to do all in their power for their chil-

dren, and brought the small sum asked for their board with a proud and happy self-respect.

One of our own members, Emma Jane Anton, on graduating at Madame's, became matron of the Home, assisted by dear Miss Prillwitz, formerly our teacher of botany, from whose heart this beautiful thought had blossomed.

The Home was just across the park from the school building and we frequently visited it; but though we were all deeply interested in this sweet charity, it did not interfere with our studies or with a great deal of girlish, innocent fun. Since Winnie had become my room-mate we had lost much of the prestige which was formerly the boast of the Amen Corner, and after Emma Jane left the little single room, Madame, feeling that our influence had done much for Winnie, sent another of the "Hornets" into our midst.

We had accepted and adopted Winnie with all our hearts, for her many lovable qualities, and above all for her genuine good fellowship and affectionate nature, but Cynthia Vaughn was a very different character. There was nothing but enjoyable fun in any of Winnie's tricks; Cynthia's were mean and malicious,

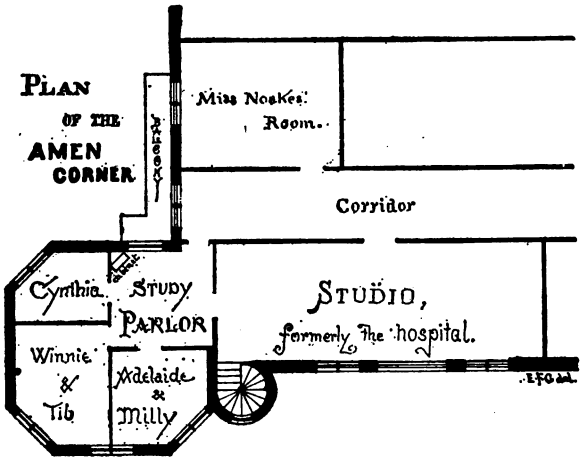
We never liked her, and she openly showed her scorn of Winnie and of me, while she fawned in a hypocritical manner, striving to ingratiate herself with aristocratic Adelaide and with gentle Milly, who was the wealthiest girl at Madame's.

We were no longer the best behaved set in school, and an acrostic formed from our initials could not now be made to spell anything; but the name "Amen Corner" clung to the little apartment, and Madame still looked upon us with favor. She knew that Adelaide and Milly, Winnie and I, were all, beneath our mischief, true-hearted, earnest girls, and she charitably hoped for great improvement in Cynthia.

There was one person who did not believe in us—Miss Noakes, our corridor teacher. She believed that Winnie was filled with all iniquity and that Adelaide was far too attractive to be allowed the confidence which Madame reposed in her. It was Miss Noakes's great grievance that she could never discover the least approach to a flirtation in Adelaide's conduct. I believe that she fairly gloated with anticipated triumph when Madame engaged a handsome young artist to take charge of our art department, and that from this time she

watched and peeped and listened with an industry which would have done credit to a better cause. She seemed to argue that as no lover of the beautiful could fail to appreciate Adelaide's beauty, therefore our artist must admire Adelaide, and in this deduction she was not far from the truth, but she ought not to have taken it for granted that Adelaide must be equally pleased with her admirer. How her espionage tracked us through several innocent tricks and capers, and was finally foiled by our beloved Winnie; how the great mystery of the robbery for a time brought doubt and suspicion between four dear friends who would, and did, go through fire and water for one another; and how, in spite of doubt and jealousy and trouble, our love and devotion for one another: burned brightly and steadily on to the end of the school year, and into the life beyond—this little book will tell.

That the events which I am about to relate may be better understood, I subjoin a plan of the "Amen Corner."


PLAN
OF THE
AMEN
CORNER
Miss Noakes'
Room.
Corridor
Cynthia
STUDY
PARLOR
STUDIO,
formerly the hospital.
Winnie
&
Tib
Adelaide
&
Milly

WITCH WINNIE'S MYSTERY.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST ESCAPADE OF THE SEASON.

"GIRLS!" Winnie exclaimed excitedly as we entered our study parlor after recitation, "I am wild with curiosity to know what they are doing in the hospital. All the morning, while I have been trying to study, there has been the greatest thumping and bumping going on in there. I wonder whether they are chaining

down an insane patient, or if the ghostly nurses are having a war dance."

"Why didn't you look and see?" Cynthia Vaughn asked, pointing to the transom over a locked door, which formerly opened from our parlor into the hospital ward.

Madame had made abundant provision for sickness in the original arrangement of the school building. A large sky-lighted room had been set apart as an infirmary, and a little suite of rooms in the great tower adjoining as the physician's quarters. But it was rare indeed that any one was ill at Madame's, and when a pupil was taken sick, her parents usually took her home at once. So the doctor, having nothing to do but to hear the recitations in physiology, preferred not to reside in the school building, and the pretty suite of rooms, consisting of a parlor and three bedrooms, was assigned to us, and the hospital proper was used as a trunk room. Winnie always maintained that ghosts of medical students experimented there in the night watches on imaginary cases of vivisection, that corpses were embalmed, and shrieks and howls were to be heard, in the wee small hours, while phantom lights fumed blue on the other side of the transom, and sickly odors

of ether and other drugs penetrated through the keyhole. We all laughed at Winnie's phantasms, but there were none of us so brave as to care to visit that room after nightfall. The trunks looked too much like coffins, and there were dresses of Madame's sewed up in bags made of sheets, and suspended from the roof, which had the uncanny look of corpses of people who had hanged themselves.

It was broad daylight now, and we were not at all nervous, and Cynthia remarked scornfully, "Winnie has told us so many of her bug-a-boo stories that she has come to actually believe in them herself. She dare not for her life look through that transom to see what occasions the noise in the hospital."

"You dare me to do it?" Winnie asked, confronting Cynthia with flashing eyes.

"Don't, Winnie," I plead. "We have no right to peep."

Winnie hesitated.

"I told you so," Cynthia said provokingly. "She dares not look. It is only a lumber room. The noise was probably made by some cat chasing a rat around."

"It would take a whole army of cats to make the noises I have heard," Winnie replied hotly, at the same time rolling Adelaide's

great Saratoga trunk in front of the door.

"There it goes again!" and as a loud hammering re-echoed through the adjoining room, she sprang upon the trunk. The transom was still too high for her to reach. "Quick, girls, something else," she exclaimed, and Milly dragged the "Commissary Department" from its retirement under my bed.

The "commissary" was a small, old-fashioned trunk, which had belonged to my great-grandmother. It was covered with cow-skin, the hair only partially worn off, and studded with brass-headed nails which formed the initials of my ancestors. It was lined with newspapers bearing the date 1790, and was altogether a very quaint and curious relic. Its chief interest to us, however, lay in the fact that it had come to us from my home filled with all the good things that a farm can produce and a mistakenly soft-hearted mother send. There were mince pies and pickles, a great wedge of cheese, a box of honey, pounds of maple-sugar, tiny sausages, a great fruit-cake, jars of pickled peaches, ginger snaps, walnuts and chestnuts, pop-corn and molasses candy, and what Milly called the *interstixes* were filled in with delicious doughnuts. It was a treasure house of richness upon which

we revelled in the night after the gas was turned out and we all met in our nightgowns, and formed a semicircle sitting on the floor around the register, while Winnie told the most deliciously frightful ghost and robber stories.

Then, it was that the "commissary" yielded up its contraband stores and we ate, and shivered, partly with cold and partly with delightful terror inspired by the rehearsal of legends for which Winnie ransacked, during the day, the pages of the detective Vidocq and Poe's prose tales.

Then if a mouse did but squeak in the deserted hospital ward, or the shuffle of Miss Noakes's slippers was heard in the corridor outside, we all scuttled incontinently to our beds, and Winnie snored loudly, while Milly buried her head beneath the blankets. Miss Noakes occupied a large room opposite the hospital. She was a disagreeable, prowling teacher and we had nicknamed her *Snooks*.

The "commissary" being now carefully poised upon the curved top of Adelaide's trunk, Winnie mounted upon it, and found that it was exactly what was needed, as it brought her face just on a level with the transom.

"O girls!" she exclaimed, "the trunks are all gone, and they are making the room over into a studio. And that handsome man that sat at Madame's table yesterday at dinner is in there hanging pictures. I wonder if he is an artist and is going to teach us. My! he is looking this way," and Winnie crouched suddenly. The movement was a careless one, and the commissary slid down the sloping cover of the trunk upon which it rested, striking the door with its end like a battering-ram, and with such force that the rusted lock yielded, and the commissary, with Winnie seated upon it, swept forward, like a toboggan, far into the center of the hospital.

It was strange that Winnie was not hurt, but she was not; and before the astonished artist could quite comprehend what had happened, she had picked herself up, scampered back into our room, and we had closed the door behind her, and were fastening it to the best of our ability by tying the knob to Adelaide's trunk by means of a piece of clothesline which had formerly served to cord the commissary.

At first we laughed long and merrily over the adventure, but by degrees its serious aspects were appreciated.

In the first place, Milly suggested dolorously that the commissary had fallen into the hands of the enemy, while Cynthia Vaughn drew attention to the fact of the broken lock.

"However you girls will explain that to Madame is more than I know," she remarked maliciously.

"*You* girls!" Winnie repeated indignantly, "as if you were not as much concerned in it as any of us."

"Indeed," Cynthia exclaimed scornfully, "if I remember rightly, it was Milly who brought the commissary from its retirement, Tib who balanced it so judiciously, and Winnie who dawned so unceremoniously on that strange man in the other room. I had absolutely nothing to do with the affair."

"You were the instigator of it all," I retorted hotly. "If you had not dared Winnie to do it she would never have tried to look in."

"That is like you, Tib," Cynthia replied icily, "to get into a scrape and then lay the blame on some one else."

"I take all the blame," Winnie exclaimed loftily. "If inquisition is ever made into this affair, I and I alone am responsible," and then she uttered a little shriek and scampered into

her own bedroom, for some one was knocking at the door, which we had just attempted to fasten.

"Who is there?" I asked, with as much boldness as I could muster; "and what do you want?"

"I am Carrington Waite, the new Professor of Art, and I would like to return property which has been most unexpectedly introduced into my studio, unless it is possible that the articles to which I refer were intended as a donation."

We all laughed at this sally, and made haste to unfasten the door, whereupon Professor Waite handed in the commissary. He had a pleasant face, and there was a merry twinkle in his eye as he said: "I tried to bundle everything in, but the trunk collided with my box of colors, and you may find rose madder in your jam, while the pickle jar actually seemed to explode, and showered pickles all over the studio. I have no doubt I shall find them along the cornice when I hang the pictures on that side of the room. The doughnuts, too, flew in every direction. Some rolled under the cabinets, and a mince pie applied itself like a plaster to the back of my neck. A bottle of tomato catsup was emptied

on one of my canvases, and made a fine impressionistic study of a sunset. I am afraid I stepped on the cheese, but I believe everything else is all right."

He looked about him with interest, and asked, "Where is the heroine who performed this astonishing acrobatic feat? I trust she was not hurt. It must have been a thrilling experience. Is it a customary form of exercise with you young ladies?"

We did not deign to reply to these questions, but I opened the commissary and offered the artist some of our choicest dainties. He accepted our largess, and retired with polite invitations for us to be "neighborly" and "to call again."

"Not in just that way," I replied, and I entreated him, if possible, to repair the broken lock. He examined it carefully.

"I am afraid," he said, "that it will require a locksmith to do it thoroughly, but I can make it look all right, and you can screw a little bolt on your side which will fasten the door securely."

We thanked him and he was about to close the door, when Adelaide, who was the only one of our circle who had not had a part in the escapade, entered the room hastily from

the corridor. "O girls," she exclaimed—but stopped suddenly as she caught sight of the open door and the young artist. At first her face showed only blank surprise, then, as she told herself that this must be a joke of Winnie's, who was fond of masquerading in costume, she remarked with dignity.

"Really, this is quite too childish; where did you ever get that absurd costume? You look too ridiculous for anything——"

Cynthia Vaughn shrieked with laughter.

The artist bowed, but colored to the roots of his hair and closed the door, while Milly threw her arms around Adelaide, laughing hysterically, Winnie appeared from behind her door also laughing, and I vainly attempted to explain matters.

"What a mortifying situation," Adelaide remarked, when she finally understood the case. "I must apologize for my rudeness, and I am sure I would rather put my hand in boiling water than speak to that man."

"I am sure I only wish that I may never see him again," said Winnie. "Nothing in this world could induce me to join the painting class, and if there is one thing that I am profoundly grateful for, it is that I have no talent for art."

CHAPTER II.

THE CABINET.

WINNIE'S queer toboggan ride was innocent enough in itself but it brought in its train many unforeseen circumstances, chief among which was the affair of the old oak cabinet.

This cabinet stood in our study parlor, in the corner diagonally opposite the door leading into the new studio, and was used as a depository of the funds of all the occupants of the Amen Corner.

The cabinet was always left locked and there was but one key to it, which was kept in the match-box, well covered with matches. Only we five knew its hiding place, or the fact that the cabinet was used as a bank. We had agreed that it was best to keep this a secret among ourselves—and it was so kept

until the day after the robbery, weeks after Winnie's escapade. We intended to follow Professor Waite's advice and buy a bolt for the door, but what was everybody's business was nobody's business, and whenever we went shopping there were so many errands that we forgot it, or some other girl, or one of the teachers was with us, and it would have been embarrassing to explain why the bolt was needed.

The door, as has been explained, opened outward from our parlor into the studio. Professor Waite had placed a heavy carved chest against it on his side, so that there was no danger of its flying open, and we had uncorded the knob and rolled Adelaide's trunk back to her bedroom. No one occupied the studio at night, and, though I spent several hours there during the day, I always entered the room by its corridor door, and we never thought when we locked our own corridor door at night how easily any one so minded could push aside the chest and enter our apartment from the studio.

That the contents of the old oak cabinet on the night of the robbery may be understood, an explanation of the finances of the different occupants of the Amen Corner is possibly now in order.

Adelaide's father and mother had gone West for the winter. Mr. Armstrong was an able financier, and he wished to make Adelaide a thorough business woman. She was eighteen years old and she might be a great heiress some day, if his wealth continued to accumulate, and he wished to accustom her to the management of money.

He had given her the year before a model tenement house, built after the most approved principles, on the site of Richetts' Court, previously occupied by one of the worst tenement houses in the city. The new building contained accommodations for ten families; the sanitation was perfect; there were no dark rooms, but bath rooms, fire escapes, and provision for every necessity. A good janitor, Stephen Trimble, occupied the lower apartment and looked after the order and comfort of the building, and every month Adelaide, attended by one of the teachers, went down and personally collected her rents, and listened to the complaints and requests of her tenants. There were few of either, and as a general rule the pay was prompt, for the rent was low, and Adelaide did all she could to oblige her tenants, having a small drying room built for the laundress, Mrs. McCarthy,

who had contracted rheumatic fever from hanging out her wash on the roof and so exposing herself to the icy winds, when overheated from the steaming tubs. Adelaide had no stringent rules against pets. She caused kennels to be built in the court for several pet dogs, and added some blossoming plants to Mrs. Blumenthal's small conservatory in the sunny south window. Noticing that the Morettis were fond of art, and had pasted cigarette pictures on their walls and driven nails to suspend some gaudy prints of the virgin and saints, she had a narrow moulding with picture hooks placed just under the ceiling in every sitting-room. She patronized all their small industries as far as it was in her power, and interested her friends in them ; having her boots made by the little shoemaker on the top floor, who was really a good workman, but had been turned away from a prominent firm, as they had cut down their list of employees. Her underclothing was made by the little seamstress on the third floor back. She gave each of her tenants a Thanksgiving dinner and a substantial present on Christmas Day, and only allowed those to be evicted whose flagrant misbehaviour showed that nothing could be done for them.

From the income of this building her father had insisted that Adelaide must pay all her expenses. As Madame's boarding school was a fashionable one, the margin left, after the payment of tuition, to be divided between dress and charity, was not very large.

Mr. Armstrong knew that Adelaide's weakness was a love for beautiful clothing; that she delighted in sumptuous velvets, in the sheen of satin, and the shimmer of gauze. Her regal beauty would not have been overpowered by a queen's toilette, but she adorned the simplest costume, and set the fashion in hats for the school season.

Mr. Armstrong also knew that Adelaide was very tender of heart, and that if left entirely to herself she would gladly have opened the doors of her tenement house freely to unscrupulous and undeserving people; that she would have easily credited every woeful story, and have remitted rents when it would have been no real kindness to do so. He therefore pitted these two weaknesses against each other. "We will see what comes of it at the close of the year," he said. "She may become a grinding, close-fisted proprietress, screwing the last possible dollar out of the poor to lavish it on her own personal

adornment, but I hope better things of Adelaide than that. It would be more like her, I think, to go to the opposite extreme—dress like an Ursuline nun and take nothing from her tenants; but let us hope that she may be able to strike the golden mean."

It was a hard thing to do, and Adelaide went without a new winter cloak until nearly Christmas time, waiting for the Morettis to pay up an arrearage; and only consented to the turning out of a shiftless family who occupied the best apartment, and were three months behind hand, because the tuition for the first term at Madame's would be due in a few days, and a respectable wood engraver offered to pay two months in advance. It was hard, because she did not wish to spend all the money on herself. She was as interested as any of us in the Home of the Elder Brother, and longed to contribute more generously to it; but since these poor people were her tenants, they were in some sense her own family, and she felt that charity began at home. Often I know that Adelaide denied herself as really, in not being more lenient, as her tenants did to scrape together their monthly rental. She was a generous girl to her friends, and before her father had made

this arrangement she deluged us all with her presents. Milly, who had unlimited credit at several stores, kept up this pernicious custom of lavishly giving presents of flowers and candies. It was hard for Winnie and me, who were in moderate circumstances, not to return them, but doubly so for Adelaide—who entreated her to desist, as we all did, but without avail. Milly was incorrigible. "You don't seem to understand," Winnie said to her at Christmas time, "that the receipt of a gift which one cannot return in kind is a bitter pill to a sensitive nature."

"No," replied Milly, "I don't understand anything of the sort. Adelaide always translates my Cæsar for me. You help me with my algebra, and Tib as good as writes my compositions. I couldn't return any of those favors '*in kind*,' and they are pills that are not the least bit bitter to me——"

"It's of no use, Adelaide," laughed Winnie, "we must let Milly have her own way. It is such a pleasure to Milly to give that we will sacrifice our own feelings and bear the infliction."

Mr. Armstrong had given Adelaide an old oak cabinet, beautifully carved in the style of the Italian Renaissance of the fifteenth cen-

tury, with architectural columns, caryatides, scroll work, and arabesques. The upper cupboard of this cabinet was used as a strong box to hold the funds of our little circle. The interior was divided into pigeon holes and shelves, and the door was provided with a curious key with a delicate wrought-iron handle.

Adelaide had given each of us a compartment in this little safe, but when its entire contents were counted there was rarely much money kept here, for Adelaide had a bank account, and after collecting her rents usually deposited them at the bank before returning to school, paying all her debts by cheque. Milly, as before explained, had her running accounts charged to her father,—a book at Arnold's, at the florist's, the confectioner's, the dressmaker's, stationer's, etc.,—but her supply of ready cash was never equal to demand, and though she could telephone for a messenger and order a coupé at any time, she was always in debt to the other girls, and I have frequently lent her postage stamps and paid her car fare.

Mr. Roseveldt had a horror of entrusting funds to young girls with no limitation of the way in which they were to be spent; he felt

that in looking over the shop-keeper's accounts he knew exactly how much Milly expended, and for what the money went. But his plan was a mistaken one; and the perfect freedom which Adelaide enjoyed was training her in a sense of responsibility, while Milly was becoming unscrupulous as to waste, where waste was encouraged, and frequently ordered a coupé when the street car would have done just as well, or rang for a messenger to save a postage stamp.

Winnie and I, the two poorer girls, were the ones who usually had money in the safe. Winnie received a moderate allowance from her father outside of her tuition, which he sent directly to Madame. As soon as the cheque arrived, she cashed it and placed the new, crisp bills in separate envelopes labelled, "Personal expenses," "Charity." She was very generous, but she had a horror of debt, and she never expended the funds in the latter envelope until she had received another remittance. As Winnie abhorred sweets, and would rather any day have gone to the dentist's than the dressmaker's, and as she had a supreme contempt for display of any kind, the charity envelope was always full, and she had usually a comfortable

margin in personal expenditure to lend or bestow on others. Winnie had always been generous, but this quality of foresight had only come to her during the past year in her work as a member of the finance committee of the Home of the Elder Brother.

My own case was different from that of the others. My father was a Long Island farmer, and my allowance, though meagre as related to my necessities, was liberal when compared with his own income. Miss Sartoris, Madame's former drawing teacher, had boarded with us one summer, during which I had sketched with her, and she had persuaded father that I possessed a talent for art and had taken me back with her to Madame's. So far I had easily led all the art students, and my studies, although abounding in faults, presumptuous and immature, were considered by the school as something quite remarkable. During the past summer a young man of engaging address, and otherwise irreproachable honesty, had stolen our beloved teacher, and Miss Sartoris, now Mrs. Stillman, was known to Madame's no more. When the school reorganized in the fall, Madame engaged me to take charge of the art department, temporarily, until she could provide her-

self with a more competent instructor. We had a small, crowded studio, with a poor light, but the class was large. I did the best I could, but we sorely needed ampler accommodations, and a head whose ability in his profession should be unquestioned. Both were now provided. Carrington Waite was a young artist fresh from the *École des Beaux Arts* at Paris, and he brought to us the training traditions of the schools, and the latest European ideas in art.

There were very few girls in the school sufficiently advanced to understand his instruction, but they flocked into the studio and listened with undisguised admiration to words that might as well have been uttered in an unknown tongue. Poor little Milly gazed at him in a rapt, adoring way, without ever comprehending what he said. The tears came to her eyes and rolled swiftly down her cheeks when he told her that it was manifestly absurd to draw a full face seen from the front with its nose in profile, but she smiled a brave little quiver of a smile while he reviled her work, and thanked him as though he had uttered the most fulsome compliments.

Even Winnie had felt the wave of influence and joined the class in spite of her assertion

that she had no taste for art and never wished to see Professor Waite again. Only Adelaide held firmly out and would none of him. Winnie was not at all afraid of the Professor, and seemed to devote herself especially to making his life miserable. When he informed her that she must join the "preparatory antique" section and draw in charcoal, she calmly explained that she "perfectly loathed" casts, and she had purchased an outfit of oil paints and intended to devote herself at once to color. Strange to say, Professor Waite humored her and gave her some of his landscape studies to copy. She was never contented with reproducing these faithfully, but always "improved" upon them, as she audaciously expressed it.

It was a common thing for Professor Waite to remark, when he sat down before Winnie's easel, "Well, this is about the worst atrocity you have yet committed."

Winnie, standing behind him, would make eyes at the rest of the girls, and remark penitently, "I am very sorry."

"You look sorry," Professor Waite replied, on one occasion.

"I don't see how you can tell how I look,"

Winnie answered, "when you are sitting with your back to me."

I do not know whether Milly's denseness or Winnie's impudence was the more irritating to Professor Waite. Winnie resented his severity to Milly and was always more provoking whenever he had grieved her pet and left her sobbing in a mire of charcoal and tears.

"You give me more trouble than a three-week's-old baby," Professor Waite had remarked to poor Milly, and Winnie had retorted spitefully, "I wish you had to take care of one—I guess you would find a difference."

Winnie's sauciness and Milly's dulness, combined with that of many of his other pupils, drove the Professor to despair after a week's trial. He told Madame, as I learned later, that he must give up the position, as her pupils were all "too hopelessly elementary."

Madame was disappointed. Her art department had always been an attractive feature, and since the name of Professor Carrington Waite, late of the *Académie des Beaux Arts*, had appeared in her circulars, many had joined the school purely for the sake of the studio

instruction. Madame explained this to the young artist.

He ran his fingers through his hair in despair. "Of what manner of use is it for me to remain?" he asked. "There is only one pupil sufficiently advanced to gain anything from my instruction, and that is Miss Smith. The others made as much advance, perhaps more, under her teaching as they have under mine."

A happy thought came to Madame. "If I engage Miss Smith as your assistant, Professor Waite, perhaps she can translate your ideas into terms which will be intelligible by the students of lower intelligence or advancement, and possibly she can so enlighten some of them that they can profit later by your personal teaching."

This plan struck Professor Waite as practicable. He now only visited the studio for an hour each morning, during which time he criticised the work which had been done under my supervision during the previous day. The new arrangement was an excellent one for me, for I profited by all his remarks, listening to them with the keenest attention, and thus received thirty lessons during the hour instead of one. As I had but three other studies, and these were in the senior class, it was possible

for me to give the necessary time by preparing all of my lessons in the evening. It was unremitting, incessant work, but my health was excellent, and art was my supreme delight. Moreover, Madame had offered me a salary of three hundred dollars beyond my school expenses, and it was perfect joy to be able to relieve father of this burden. I had a high ambition to go abroad some day and study art in Paris, and I wished to save as much as possible of my salary toward this purpose. I had the lower compartment in the safe, and here I laid away every dollar that I could spare, limiting myself in everything but my subscription to the Home of the Elder Brother; but for this outlet I would have grown niggardly and avaricious. The same charity which made Winnie prudently retrench her propensity to lavish expenditure, and take thought carefully for the morrow, kept me from utter selfishness and penuriousness by keeping one channel of generous giving open and pulsing freely toward others.

Cynthia Vaughn's affairs were kept closely to herself. We sometimes fancied that she pretended to greater wealth and consequence than she really possessed. Certainly, if the sums of which she frequently spoke of receiv-

ing were at her disposal she was a veritable miser; for her subscription to the Home was the smallest of any girl in the King's Daughters' Ten; the presents which she ostentatiously bestowed upon Adelaide and Milly were cheap though showy, as was her own clothing.

The treasures which she committed to the cabinet safe were carefully locked in a small japanned tin box, the key of which she kept in her pocket-book, and she was the only one of us whose belongings within the safe were so protected. We had perfect confidence in one another, and our funds lay open to the observation or handling of any one possessing the pass key in the match box. It is needless to say that up to the night of the robbery our security had been inviolate.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROBBERY.

ADELAIDE led the school in more respects than in the style of hats, and in the Amen Corner she reigned as absolute queen.

It may seem strange that this was so, for Winnie was the genius of our coterie. She was perhaps too active and restless. She seemed born to be a leader, but the leader of a revolt, while Adelaide had the calm assurance of a princess who had no need to assert her rights, but to whom allegiance came as a matter of course. Even

Winnie was her loyal subject and delighted in being her prime minister.

I have spoken of Winnie's fondness for reading and telling detective stories. It really seemed as if in so doing she was preparing us for the events which followed, and the time when every one of us felt that she was a special detective charged with the mission of finding a clue to a great and sorrowful mystery.

It all came about through the robbery.

On the eve of my birthday it so happened that there was an unusual amount of money in the little safe. Adelaide had returned from collecting her rents too late to deposit her funds in the bank. She looked very much relieved as she slipped a roll of bills, amounting to nearly one hundred dollars, into her pigeonhole, and turning the key, deposited it in the match safe.

Winnie had that morning cashed a check just received from her father, and had brought back from the bank some crisp, new notes, with which she filled her envelopes for the coming month. Cynthia had ostentatiously and yet mysteriously dropped some silver dollars into her cash box, and even Milly had laid aside an unwonted sum, for her father had

called at the school and contrary to his usual custom had given her five bright ten-dollar gold pieces. Milly seemed very happy as she slipped them into her snakeskin and tucked it into her own particular corner of the safe.

"Unlimited pocket money this month, eh! Milly?" I asked.

Milly laughed and shook her head.

"Don't know that I am obliged to account to you for everything," she said, saucily, but the sting was taken out of the speech by the kiss with which it was immediately followed, and I more than half suspected that Milly intended one of those gold pieces as a birthday present for me.

Late in the evening I counted over my own hoard. We were all in the study parlor, with the exception of Winnie, and as I counted I looked up and saw that Adelaide and Milly were regarding me with interest, though their glances instantly fell to the books which they had apparently been studying.

"How much have you, Tib?" Adelaide asked; "enough yet to buy the steamer ticket for the ocean passage?"

"No," I replied, "only forty-seven dollars as yet, but I hope to make it before the close of school."

"Of course you will," Milly replied reassuringly.

Cynthia laughed raspingly. "You have almost enough now, if you go in the steerage," she sneered.

Adelaide suddenly threw a bit of drawn linen work belonging to Cynthia over the money, which I had spread out in the chair before me.

"What are you doing with my embroidery?" Cynthia snapped. "Did you mistake it for a dust rag?"

"Natural mistake," Milly giggled.

Adelaide lifted her finger warningly. "Hush!" she said, "I saw a face at the transom; some one was looking in from the studio."

Milly turned pale and clutched my hand, and we all looked at the transom with straining eyes. It was almost dark in the studio and for a few moments we saw nothing but some one was moving about, for we heard cautious steps, and a creaking sound just the other side of the door. Presently a hat cautiously lifted itself into view through the transom. It was a broad-brimmed, soft felt hat of the Rembrandt style, which Professor Waite sometimes wore. It moved about silently from one side of the transom to the other, descended, and appeared again.

"I never thought that Professor Waite would peep or listen," Cynthia whispered.

"He would not," I replied aloud. "He must be at work there hanging pictures or doing something else of the sort."

"Then he would make more noise," Cynthia suggested, as the hat continued its stealthy movements.

"It may be some one else who has put on the Professor's hat as a disguise," Milly gasped.

"That was the reason I covered up the money," Adelaide replied, in a low voice. "You had better put it away, Tib."

I hastily bundled my money into the safe and locked the door, and we sat for some moments quietly watching the transom, but the spectre did not come again. Winnie entered a few moments later and seemed greatly interested by our accounts of the incident.

"Do you suppose that it could have been one of that band of Italian bravos who has climbed up on the fire-escape and who intends to murder us?" she asked with an assumption of terror.

"Hush," I whispered, pulling her dress, and pointing to Milly whose eyes were staring with fright.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Winnie; "can't you tell when I'm joking? It was Professor Waite. Of course it was Professor Waite. He has been in love with Adelaide ever since she complimented him on his appearance at their first meeting. He is dying for a glimpse at her fair face, and as she won't join his painting class he relieves his yearning heart by gazing over the transom."

There was more joking, and Milly's fears were as quickly quieted as they had been raised. Professor Waite had undoubtedly been at work in the studio, I insisted, and I knocked on the door and called his name.

No answer, and I tried to open the door, but the chest held it firmly in place. "Shall I look over the transom?" I asked.

"For pity's sake do not repeat Winnie's experience," Adelaide begged.

"Then I will look in by the corridor door," I said resolutely, and I stepped down the hall and into the studio. The door was open, so was Miss Noakes's door just opposite, and that watchful lady sat rocking and reading beside her little centre table. She was not too much absorbed, however, to give me a keen questioning glance—but she said nothing, for

as assistant teacher in art I had a perfect right to frequent the studio.

The moon was shining in clearly through the great window, and every object was distinctly visible, but there was no one in the room. I opened the door leading to the turret staircase and listened; all was silent, and I screwed up my courage and descended, finding the door at the foot safely locked. The great Rembrandt hat lay on the chest in front of our door, and the Professor's mahl-stick, or long support on which he rested his arm when painting, leaned beside it. I could not see any change in the disposition of the pictures on the wall, or other indications of what the Professor had been doing, if indeed it was the Professor, and I did not know of his ever before visiting the studio at that hour. As I came out I noticed that Miss Noakes was still rocking before her open door, her slits of eyes glancing sharply up.

"Have you seen any one go into the studio lately?" I asked.

"No one has passed through the corridor since the beginning of study hour, with the exception of Miss Winifred De Witt."

"Then this door must have been open all

the time, and you have seen no one in the studio?"

"I have observed no one. Why do you ask?"

"We thought we saw the shadow of a man on the transom."

"Nonsense—it is silly to be frightened at nothing. It was probably Professor Waite. If you young ladies would interest yourselves less in the movements of that young man it would be much more becoming in you."

I turned away quickly, not relishing her tone, and looked at the corridor window, which opened on the balcony of the fire escape. It was securely fastened. I was puzzled, but did not wish to alarm Milly, and I now reported only what seemed to me the favorable aspects of the case.

No one there, all quiet and in order; lower turret door opening on the street, and the corridor window opening on the balcony, both locked, showing that no one could have come up the stairs or the fire escape. Miss Noakes, on guard, had seen no one enter the studio.

Of course it must have been Professor Waite.

"Of course," Winnie echoed. "Tib knows him too well to be mistaken even when she

only sees him through a glass darkly. But think what that devotion must be, which leads a man to keep guard before his lady's door at night," and Winnie shouldered an umbrella and paced back and forward, singing in a deep bass voice, "Thy Sentinel am I."

Winnie was irresistible and we all laughed merrily at her pranks. But for all that I locked the cabinet with unusual care that night and Adelaide tried the door afterward to see that it was securely fastened. While doing so, she noticed something which we had not hitherto discovered—a little steel ornament like a nail head at the foot of one of the columns. Touching this, a small shelf shot forward. It had evidently been intended for a writing table, for it was ink-stained. Adelaide pushed it easily back into its place and its edge formed one of the three moldings which formed the base of the upper division of the cabinet.

"That is a very convenient little arrangement," Adelaide said. "I wonder that I have never noticed it before."

I soon fell asleep, and slept long and dreamlessly. I awoke at last with an uneasy feeling of cold. It was quite dark, and putting out my hand I found that Winnie's place at my

side was vacant. I started up alarmed, and called her name. There was a little pause, during which I stumbled out of bed and groped vainly for a candle, which usually stood on a stand at the head of the bed. Not finding it, I noticed a beam of light streaming from beneath the closed door leading into the study-parlor, and I remembered vividly that when I went to bed I had left that door open, as I always did, for more perfect ventilation. I stood hesitating, vaguely alarmed, when the door was opened from the parlor side and Winnie stood before me holding a lighted candle—her face white as that of a spirit.

"How you frightened me!" I exclaimed. "What is the matter?"

"Nothing, I merely went out to see whether the door into the corridor was locked. I was lying awake, and I could not remember seeing any one lock it."

She spoke mechanically, and her voice sounded strange and hollow.

"Why, you did it yourself!" I exclaimed.

"Did I? Strange I should forget."

"You found everything all right, didn't you?"

"The door was not only locked but bolted," Winnie replied; but her manner was con-

strained, and her hand, which I happened to touch, was cold as ice.

"Come right to bed," I exclaimed, "you have taken cold."

Winnie did not reply, but her teeth were chattering. She curled up in bed and buried her face in her pillow. I was sleepy and soon dozed off, but I was vaguely conscious in my slumbers that I had an uneasy bedfellow; that Winnie tossed and tumbled and even groaned. When I awoke she was sitting, dressed, on the window sill. It may have been the early light but her face looked gray, and there was a drawn, set expression about the mouth which I had never seen there before.

"What is the matter?" I asked again.

"She replied, in that cold, unnatural voice, "Nothing."

Just then there was a hard knocking at my door. Milly shouted joyfully, "Many happy returns of the day," and swooping down upon me buried me with kisses. Adelaide followed, and in a more dignified manner congratulated me on my birthday. "No flowers, Tib," Milly explained, "because you set your face against that sort of thing, and I was determined to let you have your own way on your birthday. Winnie, what makes you sit over there like

a sphinx, with your nose touched with sunrise? Come here and help us give Tib her seventeen slaps and one to grow on."

"Tib will find my present on the stand at the head of the bed," Winnie replied, and turning, I discovered an envelope labelled, "For the European tour." It contained a crisp new bill of twenty dollars.

Adelaide and Milly looked at each other significantly, and Milly exclaimed:

"You dear, generous thing! Why didn't you tell us that you meant to do anything so lovely? Adelaide and I would have helped."

Winnie did not reply to Milly, but answered my thanks with a close hug.

"Come," said Milly, "and put your money in the safe, and see how much you have now toward the fund."

"Oh! that's easy to calculate," I replied, as I slipped on my clothing, "twenty and forty-seven—sixty-seven dollars exactly."

Adelaide coughed significantly. "Tib seems to be very confident that two and two makes four," she remarked. A suspicion that both Adelaide and Milly intended to help me suggested itself to my mind, and I hastened my dressing and unlocked the safe. As I did so Cynthia opened her door. "Oh! it's you, she

exclaimed; "whenever I hear any one at the safe I always look to see who it is."

She did not retreat into her room, but stood in the door watching us with a singular expression on her disagreeable face. Adelaide and Milly were looking over my shoulder. Milly apparently vainly endeavoring to conceal a little flutter of excitement. We were all there but Winnie, who had not left her seat at the window, when I threw open the door of the safe and disclosed—nothing!

The space on the floor where I usually kept my money, where the night before I had placed a long blue envelope containing forty-seven dollars—was empty. The envelope and its contents gone.

Milly uttered a little shriek. Adelaide stepped forward and examined the space, passing her hand far in, and feeling carefully in every corner. Then she took out her own roll of bills from her little pigeon-hole. I counted them with her, just fifty-dollars less than the sum which I saw her place there. She handed me a five dollar bill, saying, "Tib, my dear, my only disappointment is that I cannot give you as large a birthday present as I had planned."

Milly threw her arms around me, "And I

can't give you anything, you darling old Tib. I am so sorry."

"How do you know you can't?" Cynthia asked. "You haven't looked to see whether you have lost anything."

Milly flushed. "If Tib has lost her money, of course I have mine."

"Why, of course? The thief has obligingly left Adelaide a part of her money; perhaps yours is all there."

Milly opened her purse. It was quite empty. She closed it with a snap.

"I don't see how you knew it," Cynthia remarked unpleasantly. "Now I am really too curious to see whether I have been as unfortunate as the rest of you." In spite of this profession of eagerness she had seemed to me remarkably indifferent, and she unlocked her strong box with great deliberation, manifesting no surprise or pleasure as she reported "three dollars and fifty-three cents, precisely what I left there. This shows the wisdom of my double-lock; the thief evidently had no key which would fit my strong-box."

"Winnie," I called "we have had a burglary; come right here and see whether you have lost anything."

Winnie entered the room slowly, almost

unwillingly, quite in contrast with her usual impulsive action, and opened her envelopes before us. "No one has touched my money," she said; "here is exactly what I placed in the envelopes last night."

"Did you go to the safe in the night to get that twenty dollar bill which you gave me this morning?" I asked.

Cynthia Vaughn turned and looked at Winnie eagerly.

"I kept it out last night," Winnie replied, "when I put the rest away. You will remember that I sealed the envelopes then, and I find them now unopened."

An expression of malice and triumph, such as I have never seen on the face of any human being, rested on Cynthia's countenance.

"There is something very mysterious about this," she remarked, in an eager way. "The thief has entirely spared Winnie and me, and has been obliging enough to take only half of Adelaide's money. Tib and Milly lose all of theirs, but Tib's was money for which she had no immediate use. So that she will not feel its loss as much as Winnie or I would have done, and Milly has no real need of money at all—I wonder whether the thief was acquainted with our

circumstances; if so he or she was very considerate."

"I don't know what you mean about Tib's not feeling the loss," Winnie began indignantly, her glance resting not on Cynthia but on Milly. "It will be a cruel disappointment to her if she cannot go to Europe to study, after all."

"Oh! that's not to be thought of," Milly replied, feeling herself addressed. "Of course Tib will go. Something will turn up. The money will be discovered. Perhaps the thief will return it."

A light flamed up in Winnie's face. It was the first pleasant look that I had seen there this morning. "It must be so," she exclaimed eagerly, but very gravely; "let us hope that the person who took that money was actuated by dire necessity; that it was simply borrowed, and that it will be returned."

"Nonsense," exclaimed Cynthia impatiently. "I have no such excuses to make for a thief, and I am going right now to report the entire affair to Madame, who will of course put it in the hands of the police——"

"The police!" Winnie cried, in a tone of dismay. "Oh! no, no!"

"Wait," said Adelaide commandingly; "that is not the way we do things in the Amen

Corner. This is something in which we are all interested, and the majority shall rule. Now Winnie, will you please tell us why the police should not take this matter in charge? My explanation is that some thief entered this room last night through the studio door. Probably it was the very individual who was watching us last night through the transom."

"Oh! not Professor Waite," Milly exclaimed, and Winnie started as though about to speak, but restrained the impulse.

"No, not Professor Waite, certainly," Adelaide continued, "but some one disguised in his hat. This thief waited until we were all asleep, and then began to help himself to the contents of our safe, but was probably interrupted or frightened by some sound, after securing Milly's and Tib's money, and hurried away without taking as much as he wished. That is the simplest, most likely solution, and it seems to me that the police are the proper authorities to take the affair in hand."

She paused for several moments. We all chattered together as fast and as loudly as we could. Then Adelaide rapped on the table with a nutcracker and said:

"I shall now put the question. Those in

favor of reporting this matter at once to Madame, please say 'Ay;' those opposed, the contrary sign—but first, any remarks?"

Winnie hesitated. "I do not agree with you that it is a matter in which we are all equally interested," she said slowly. "Tib is the principal loser. Tib should decide what she wishes to do. Adelaide's theory looks plausible, but it may be wrong. Some member of this school may have entered through that door, and taken the money. Whatever is handed over to the police, goes into the papers. We do not want to bring on the school scandal and disgrace, which would follow the publishing of the fact that one of its pupils is a thief."

"Winnie seems to be very certain that the thief is a pupil," Cynthia remarked sneeringly. "If so, we can trust that Madame will ferret her out without outside assistance."

"My chief reason, however," continued Winnie, "for waiting a day or two before reporting this thing, is the hope that conscience will lead the unhappy person who has committed the crime to make restitution. Tib, you certainly look at the matter as I do. You are not vindictive; give the wrong-doer a chance."

"Certainly," I said.

"The question," called Cynthia. "Adelaide, put the question."

"Those in favor of reporting at once to Madame?" said Adelaide.

"Aye," from Cynthia, loud enough for two.

"Aye," more faintly, from Milly.

"Those opposed?"

"No," from Winnie and from me.

"A tie," announced Adelaide. "Then the chair gives the casting vote. I am in favor of reporting to Madame, and I think we had better make the report in a body. There is just time to see her before breakfast."

"I do not see the necessity of our going *en masse*," Winnie objected. "Tib, of course, as the individual who has suffered most, and who discovered the loss; Cynthia, who seems to enjoy telling unpleasant things; and Adelaide, who is strictly just, and the oldest and most dignified member of the Amen Corner. But I do not see why you should drag Milly along; the child has had enough excitement already. Let her lie down and rest her little head until the breakfast bell rings. As for me, I'm not going until I'm sent for. Not even a burglary shall make me miss my morning constitutional," and Winnie quickly equipped herself for a walk in the grounds.

"Milly shall do as she pleases," Adelaide said; "there is really no necessity, as you say, for her to go with us."

"I think I would rather go," Milly said hesitatingly.

An expression of keen disappointment swept across Winnie's face.

"Come, Winnie," I said, "you had better be with us; it looks better."

"What do you mean?" she asked hotly.

"Only that the Amen Corner always yields to the wish of the majority, and we are in the habit of standing by one another, even when we do not quite agree."

"Winnie need not trouble herself," Cynthia remarked; "we can get on very well without her. Of course she knows no more about the affair than the rest of us."

The words were innocent enough, but there was something very sarcastic in the way in which they were uttered.

"Evidently you would rather I would not go," Winnie said, as though thinking aloud. "I am sorry to be disobliging, but if that is the case I believe I will."

CHAPTER IV.

TROUBLE IN THE AMEN CORNER.

Doubt,
A soul-mist through whose rifts familiar stars
Beholding, we misname.

—*Jean Ingelow.*

MILLY had been unhappy for days.

And now a great trouble fell upon all of us. It was as though a dense fog of doubt and suspicion had drifted in upon the Amen Corner, separating dear friends, so that we could not recognize each other's faces through its dense folds, and our voices sounded false and far away as we called and groped for one another.

Our interview with Madame was very brief. I simply stated the fact of the disappearance of the money, which the other girls corroborated.

Cynthia began to enlarge on the statement, but Madame stopped her.

"I have not time now to investigate this unhappy affair," she said. "Indeed, it is something which will probably require the assistance of a detective. Do not look so alarmed," she added to Milly; "I happen to be acquainted with a gentleman—in fact, he is my lawyer—who has all the qualifications of a very clever detective. I will write, asking him to call, and to take charge of the case. He will keep it all very quiet. I am glad that you have come to me first of all, and I particularly request that you mention the fact of the robbery to no one."

With this she dismissed us, and we went to breakfast a little late, feeling very important in the possession of a mystery. Winnie was the only one whom this mystery did not seem to elate. Cynthia, who sat beside me at table, was overflowing with glee.

"It is better than the most exciting story which Winnie ever told us," she whispered to me. "Won't it be fun to follow the unravel-

ling of the crime. Of course the detective will be led off by false clues, and all that sort of thing, and the real thief will suffer all the torture of alternate fear of detection and hope of escape; but the toils will close gradually about the doomed individual. I shall not disclose my suspicions till toward the last. Oh! what fun it will be to watch the development of the drama. I should think, Tib, that you would write it up."

"Your suspicions?" I repeated. "Do you really suspect any one?"

"Why, yes; don't you?"

"No indeed!"

"Then all I've got to say is that you are a lamb. You think every one as innocent as yourself. Because you have the innocence of a lamb, you have a corresponding muttony intelligence."

I was very indignant, but I did not show it. "Whom do you suspect?" I asked.

"That's telling," she replied, "and I said that I would not tell at this stage of the game."

Later in the day, as I left the studio to return to our study-parlor, I met Winnie coming out. She had on her hat and cloak and carried my own. "Come and walk with me," she said, "I feel all mugged up, and I need a good

tramp. Milly is in there trying to take a nap. Adelaide and Cynthia are at recitation, and if you will come with me the poor child can get a little rest."

As we marched around the school building together, I told her of my conversation with Cynthia. Winnie started.

"I don't believe she really knows anything more than we do," I said. Cynthia loves to be important and aggravating. If she really knew anything she couldn't keep it in."

"Find out whom she suspects," Winnie replied. "Cynthia is a real snake in the grass, and can do a lot of mischief by fastening the crime on an innocent person. I do not mean that she would do this wilfully, unless she had a strong motive for revenge, but she is unscrupulous as to the results of her actions, and loves to imagine evil and set forth facts in their most damaging light. Find out, by all means, whether she really knows anything likely to implicate any one."

"Cynthia is a hard orange to squeeze," I replied. "If she thinks I want to know, she will delight in tantalizing me."

Winnie was silent for a moment. "Find out whether Cynthia slept soundly all night, or whether she heard or saw any one in the

parlor. She might have heard me, you know, when I went out to look at the door."

"Sure enough," I replied. "If that is all I will get it out of her right away."

We returned to our rooms. There was no one in the parlor. Winnie looked into the bedrooms. Only Milly sleeping peacefully, and Winnie stepped to the match box, took the key, and opened the safe. I do not know what she expected to find, but she looked disappointed.

"Did you think the thief would help himself again in broad daylight?" I asked.

"No," Winnie replied shortly.

At that instant Cynthia entered, flushed, and as it seemed to me triumphant. "Mr. Mudge wants to see you, Winnie, in Madame's private library," she announced importantly.

"Who is Mr. Mudge?" Winnie asked.

"He is Madame's lawyer. The keenest, shrewdest man you ever saw, with little gimletty eyes that bore the truth right out of you; and such a cross-questioner! If you have a secret, he knows it the minute he looks at you, and makes you tell it, in spite of yourself, the first time that you open your mouth. You need not try to keep your suspicions to yourself, they will be out before you can say Jack Robinson."

Winnie gave a little sigh. "And you say he wants to see me?" she asked, rising with a palpable effort.

"Yes, he wants to question us each separately, to see if our testimony agrees, I suppose. He asked Madame, as I went in, if she had kept us apart since the robbery to guard against any—collision—I think that was the word!"

"Collusion," I corrected.

"No matter; he meant that we might have hatched up a story between us, but Madame assured him that we were all honorable girls and incapable of such a thing."

"Of course," he replied, "unless they happen to know or suspect the culprit, and wish to shield her. In such cases, I have known the most religious young persons to lie like a jockey."

Winnie left the room, throwing me a look of piteous appeal as she did so, which I understood to beg me to find out all I could from Cynthia. I rocked silently for a few moments, to disclaim all eagerness, and then said casually: "I don't believe you would ever lie to save a friend." This in a propitiating tone, adding to myself, "you would be much more likely to tell a lie to get one into trouble."

Cynthia could not hear the thought, and she stretched herself luxuriously on the divan.

"No," she replied, "I don't make any pretense of being good; but I wouldn't do that. Whenever the Hornets got into scrapes, I always told. Madame could depend on me for that. It is sneaky not to be willing to take the consequences. Besides, you get off a great deal easier if you own up; and others will be sure to throw the blame on you if you are not smart enough to get ahead of them."

How I despised her. "I wonder if she thinks she is in danger of being called in question for this crime," I thought, "and has made haste to accuse some one else."

"You said you meant to keep your testimony until the end, so I suppose you did not tell Mr. Mudge your suspicions," I remarked.

"Didn't I just say that I did tell him?"

"Well, as they are only suspicions I presume he paid no attention to them. Lawyers generally tell witnesses to confine their testimony to facts."

"But I had facts, suspicious facts; not ideas of my own, but important circumstantial evidence."

"*In*deed!" I purposely threw as much in-

credulity as I could into the way in which I uttered the word.

Cynthia sprang from the lounge, her eyes flashing with anger. "Yes, *indeed;* very awkward facts for your precious friend Winnie to explain away."

"Winnie!" I exclaimed, and then laughed outright.

Cynthia was furious. "What do you say to this Tib Smith? I saw Winnie, with my own eyes, come into this room in her nightgown, with a lighted candle in her hand, carefully close all the doors, and——"

"Pooh! that's nothing," I replied cheerfully. "I was awake; I saw her, too. She merely crossed the room to see whether the corridor-door was locked."

"Yes, and after that?"

"Came back to bed again."

"There you are telling a fib to save your friend. She did not go back immediately. I was awakened by her softly closing my door, I got up and peeked through the keyhole, and I saw her open the safe and rummage around in it for quite a while, undoubtedly possessing herself of the money. Then she locked it and hurried back to her room looking as frightened as the criminal she was."

"It is not so! It is a wicked, cruel falsehood!" Milly cried, springing into the room. I had forgotten her presence in the bedroom and Cynthia of course did not know of it.

Cynthia was taken aback for a moment. "I will tell you why I know it was so," she said at length. "After Winnie went back to the room, and before any one else could have entered the parlor, I examined the safe and the money was gone."

"That proves nothing," I said; "it was probably taken before Winnie opened the safe."

"Then she knew of the robbery in the morning before the rest of you, and never told."

"You knew and never told either," said Milly.

"I was waiting for the proper time," replied Cynthia. "If Winnie did not take that money then she suspects who did. If she does not tell Mr. Mudge her suspicions, she is trying to shield the guilty person, and the—the shielder is as bad as the thief."

"There is no proverb that says so," I replied; "beside, you have proved nothing. If all that you say is true—and I don't mind telling you, Cynthia Vaughn, that I am not entirely sure of that—if what you say *is* true,

you are as deep in the mud as Winnie is in the mire."

"You think Winnie a saint!" Cynthia sneered. "You don't half know her. Before she came to room in the Amen Corner, and we were both in the Hornets Nest up under the eaves, she was the Queen Hornet of all. There was nothing which she would not dare to do, from letting down bouquets in her scrap-basket to the cadet band when they serenaded us, to bribing the janitor to let her slip out at night and buy goodies at the corner grocery for our spreads. She was a regular case, and her pet name all over the school was:

> 'The malicious, seditious, insubordinate,
> Disreputable, sceptical Queen of the Hornets.'"

"We know all that," I replied, "but there are some things which Winnie *could* not do. She could not tell a lie, and she could not steal."

"I don't know about that," Cynthia continued coldly. "She comes from an uncertain sort of Bohemian ancestry. You know, her mother was an actress and her father a playwright."

Cynthia told this with great triumph, evidently thinking that we had never heard it."

"Madame told us," I replied, "that Mrs.

De Witt was a very lovely woman, who only acted in her husband's plays; that she made it her life purpose to realize and explain her husband's ideals: and that he wrote the part of the heroine especially to suit her, so that their creations were among the most charming that have ever been presented on the stage. They were devoted to one another, and when she died his heart was broken. He does not write plays any more, but articles for encyclopædias, which is an extremely respectable profession."

"And you dared prejudice this Mr. Mudge against our own precious Winnie," Milly continued. "You are just the meanest girl, Cynthia Vaughn, that ever lived! But you never can make any one believe anything against her. If, as Tib says, it lies between you two, we all know who is the more likely to have done it."

Cynthia turned green. "Do you dare to accuse me?" she hissed.

"No, Milly; don't do that," I cried warningly, and the overwrought girl burst into a flood of tears and threw herself into my arms. "We accuse no one," I said to Cynthia. "I trust that you have been equally cautious with Mr. Mudge."

"What I may have said or may not have said is no business of yours," Cynthia replied. "You have both of you insulted me beyond endurance, and from this time forth I shall never speak to any of you. I except Adelaide," she added, after a moment's consideration. "Adelaide is the only member of the Amen Corner who has treated me like a lady."

"I think it would be pleasanter for you and for us if you would ask Madame to let you room somewhere else," Milly suggested.

"I shall not go simply because you wish it," Cynthia replied. "I shall stay to watch developments."

"And, meantime, I believe you said we were to be deprived of the pleasure of any conversation with you," I remarked, rather flippantly.

Cynthia turned her back upon me and from that time kept her word, maintaining a sullen silence with every one but Adelaide.

The bell rang for luncheon. The forenoon had seemed very long, and the afternoon was simply interminable. Milly left the room with me. Cynthia did not stir.

"Do you think she took it?" Milly asked, nodding back at the parlor.

"No," I replied, "she is altogether too gay.

She evidently enjoys the investigation. If she were the culprit she would be constrained, nervous, averse to having the affair examined." I stopped suddenly, realizing how exactly this description fitted Winnie.

"Adelaide believes," Milly said slowly, "that it was some sneak thief from outside the house. Have you looked about in the studio for any suspicious circumstances?"

I replied that I would do so after dinner, and then, as we passed into the dining-room together, the subject was dropped.

Winnie came to the table late and passed me a note, which I read beneath my napkin.

"Mr. Mudge wants to question you next. You are to meet him in Madame's parlor immediately after luncheon. Hurry and finish, so that I can have a minute with you before you see him."

I bolted my dinner, and Winnie sat silently staring before her, eating nothing. We left the dining-room five minutes before the conclusion of the meal, bowing as we passed Madame's table, as was our custom when we wished to be excused before the others. Madame's attention was absorbed by the teacher with whom she was conversing, and we passed out unhindered.

"What did you find out from Cynthia?" Winnie asked, as we walked toward the Amen Corner. "Does she suspect any one?"

"Yes," I replied. "She is perfectly absurd. It is just as you said; she insists on fastening the crime on a perfectly innocent person."

Winnie drew in her breath. "One of us, I presume?"

"Yes, Winnie dear. But," I hastened to add, for she grew suddenly deadly pale, "she can do no harm; her suspicions are too manifestly impossible."

"I don't know," Winnie chattered; "the reputation of many an innocent person has been blasted by mere circumstantial evidence. What does Cynthia know? What has she told?"

"That she saw you go to the safe in the night."

"Me? Then I am the one whom she suspects, and not—you are sure she saw no one else?" Winnie laughed a long, joyous laugh. "I can stand it, Tib," she said, "I can stand it. It's too good a joke."

"Of course," I said, "no one can prove anything against you. But did you go to the safe? I didn't see you do so."

Winnie's face clouded. "Yes, I looked in

to see if everything was right. Mr. Mudge asked me if I had opened the safe during the night. He said that some one of us had been seen to do it, but he led me to suppose that he suspected some one else. I knew that he had his information from Cynthia, and I was afraid she had seen some one else. I mean—" and here Winnie corrected herself with some confusion—" I was afraid that she might have taken me for some other person, and I was very glad to acknowledge that I was the one who had opened the safe. I don't think that Mr. Mudge believes that I am the culprit, for he smiled at me in a very friendly way."

" How could he believe such a thing?" I asked. " It is perfectly nonsensical."

" But if he does not suspect me, his suspicions will probably fasten on some one else. On you, for instance, or Adelaide,—and I would rather be the scapegoat than have any annoyance come to the rest of you."

We had reached the Amen Corner, and had just opened the study-parlor door. Winnie gave a little cry of surprise. The door into the studio was open and a strange man stood looking at the broken lock.

CHAPTER V.

L. MUDGE, DETECTIVE.

"The look o' the thing, the chance of mistake,
All were against me. That I knew the first;
But knowing also what my duty was, I did it."

"WHY, Mr. Mudge!" Winnie exclaimed, recovering herself, "excuse me for crying out, but really I did not expect to see you here."

"I presume not," the gentleman replied dryly. "Under other circumstances such intrusion would be unwarrantable ,but I

presume you understand that in a case like this we must question not only human witnesses but the place itself, and often our most valuable testimony is of a circumstantial character. This broken lock, for instance, would seem to prove that the thief entered through the studio."

"Oh! that," I cried, "proves nothing; it has been broken this long while—since the very beginning of the term."

Winnie clasped my hand tightly, and I understood that she did not wish her escapade with the sliding trunk explained.

"Are you sure of that?" Mr. Mudge asked, looking slightly disappointed. "Even if the lock was not broken on the night of the robbery, the fact still remains that an entrance was practicable here at that time."

"Why, of course!" I exclaimed. "It must have been the man who looked in at the transom."

"What man?" asked Mr. Mudge; and I told the story of the appearance the night before. Winnie came forward impulsively, as though she wished to interrupt me, then seemed to change her mind and walked to the window, standing with her back to us.

"And why is it," asked Mr. Mudge, "that

neither Miss Cynthia nor Miss Winnie have mentioned this very suspicious circumstance?"

"I was not in the room when it happened, I did not see the man," Winnie replied, without turning her head.

"This thief may have made an earlier attempt which was foiled," Mr. Mudge continued. "It seems to me a little careless that you did not report the fact of the broken lock when you first discovered it, and have the fastening mended."

Winnie's eyes shone with suppressed amusement. "You think, then, Mr. Mudge, that some one from the outside committed the burglary? I am very glad that you have renounced the idea that any member of this school could have been guilty of such a thing."

"My dear young lady," replied Mr. Mudge, "I never indulge in preconceived ideas, but I give every possibility a hearing. I have nearly completed my examination of the *locale*, but must ask one trifling favor. Will you kindly lend me all your keys?"

"You don't mean to say that you are going through all our things?" I exclaimed, aghast at the thought that the secret of the commissary must now be disclosed.

"A mere matter of form," he murmured, extending his hand with persuasive authority. Winnie delivered her one key promptly, saying, "I will go and tell the other girls."

"Quite unnecessary," Mr. Mudge replied. "I have a pass key which opened Miss Adelaide's capacious trunk. I have shaken out all her furbelows and tried to fold them again as well as I could, but I fear that the gowns with trains were a little too difficult for me. Miss Milly's bureau drawers were in a wild state of mix: ribbons, laces, gloves, hair crimpers, dried-up cake, perfumery, jewelry, chewing-gum, love letters (innocent ones from other young ladies), a manicure set, a bonnet pulled to pieces, a box of Huyler's, fancy work, dressmaker's and other bills (which I have taken the liberty to borrow for a day or two), dancing slippers and German favors, a tin box containing marshmallows and a bottle of French dressing, menthol pencil, pepsum lozenges for indigestion, box of salted almonds, bangles, sachet, photograph of Harvard football team, notes to lectures on evidences of Christianity, silver bonbonnière containing candied violets, programmes of symphony rehearsals, caramels and embroidery silks gummed together, a handsome book of etch-

ings converted into a herbarium or pressing book for botany class, and strapped together by buckling elastic garters around it; fine Geneva watch, out of order; match box containing specimens of live beetles, which I fear I released; pair of embroidered silk stockings, in need of mending; a diary, disappointing since it contains but two entries; packet of letters from home, tied with corset lacing (these I have borrowed), packet of ditto from a certain 'Devotedly yours, Stacey, F. S.' tied with blue ribbon—these are of no interest to me and I will not violate their secrets; badge of the Kings' Daughters, button of West Point cadet, a fan bearing some autographs, a mouldy lemon, a dream book, etc., etc. The more I tried to examine her affairs the more confused I became, and I finally dumped them all out on the floor and then shoveled them back again. I don't believe she will ever suspect that they have been touched."

I laughed, but Winnie looked uneasy. "I think, sir," she said, "that it is hardly honorable to carry away Milly's private letters."

"Any objection to having me read yours?" he asked sharply.

"None at all," Winnie replied, at the same time handing him her little writing desk, "but

with Milly the case is different. I do not think Mr. Roseveldt will like it."

"Mr. Roseveldt will understand the necessity of the case," Mr. Mudge replied.

"Have you looked through Cynthia's things?" I asked.

"Yes, first of all. Everything in admirable order. She sets you other young ladies an example in point of neatness. And now, Miss Smith, I will thank you to give me the key to that small, old-fashioned trunk under your bed. It is the only one which my pass key will not fit; the lock has gone out of date."

"Any one but a detective could have opened it without a key," I replied, somewhat snappishly, "if they had had the penetration to discover that the hinges are broken. You simply swing the lid around this way."

"Dear, dear, and so we keep a restaurant, do we? I believe I now understand the slight trepidation which you manifested on being requested to deliver up your keys. Reassure yourself. I am retained to unravel but one mystery; any others which may tumble into my possession during the search will be as safe as though buried in the grave. I believe this is all, as far as the rooms are concerned. If Miss Smith will accompany me now

to the library, I will take her personal deposition."

Mr. Mudge was in the main kind. He did not alarm me in the least, and asked but few questions.

"Have you reason to suspect any one?"

"No."

"Very good. Did you see any one in the parlor the night of the robbery?"

"Yes, Winnie."

"But you did not suspect her when you discovered that the money was gone?"

"No, Winnie was honest and open as the day; it was impossible that she could take it."

"Hum, your parlor-mate, Miss Vaughn, does not share your opinion of your friend. Do you know of any reason for the coolness which apparently exists between them?"

"Yes, Winnie has frankly given Cynthia her opinion of certain underhanded performances of hers."

"Such as——"

"I am not a tale-bearer."

"In this examination, Miss Smith, you will please answer all questions put to you—and abstain from flippancy. Believe me, I ask nothing from idle curiosity; nothing which does not have its bearings on this case."

"Cynthia is continually doing things that exasperate Winnie. She put her muff between the sheets at the foot of Milly's bed. When Milly slipped her foot down and felt the fur she thought that it was a rat or some wild animal, and she nearly shrieked herself into convulsions. Cynthia laughed till she almost cried, but Winnie was raging with indignation, and gave her such a scoring that Cynthia has never forgiven her."

"Is that the only source of unpleasantness between them?"

"No; such affairs are always coming up," and I related the trick of the costumes, which has been told in the preceding volume. "And lately," I added, "Cynthia has been very obsequious to Milly, and they have been quite intimate. Winnie has not approved of the friendship. She told Milly that she did not believe Cynthia was sincere, but did not succeed in separating them. Cynthia surmised that Winnie was not pleased, and taunted her with being jealous, and Winnie let them proudly alone, until something happened at Milly's dressmaker, when she interfered again, declaring that Cynthia was going too far, and that Milly needed some one to protect her."

"What happened at the dressmaker's?"

"I don't know exactly. Milly went to the dressmaker's rooms last week to have a dress fitted, and Winnie was with her. She came back very much displeased, and had a long talk with Cynthia in her bedroom. As she came out we heard her say, 'Downright dishonorable; as bad as stealing;' and Cynthia called after her: 'I'll pay you for this; we shall see who is a thief, Miss Winifred De Witt.'"

"Hum!" said Mr. Mudge. "The importance of these little tiffs between girls must not be exaggerated. They have probably made it all up by this time."

"Indeed they have not," I replied.

"Can you give me the address of Miss Milly's dressmaker? On second thought, it is of no consequence. I have it on this bill: 'To Madame Celeste, Fifth Avenue: For tailor-made costume in dark green cloth, trimmed with sable, sixty-seven dollars.'"

"But that was Cynthia's dress," I said.

"It is charged here to Miss Milly Roseveldt."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, a light beginning to break in.

"And you never suspected what it was that occurred at the dressmaker's which displeased Miss Winnie?"

"Never, until this moment. Milly has cried a great deal, but she would not tell her trouble, even to Adelaide."

"Very well. I will step across to Madame Celeste. No; on reflection I will speak to Miss Milly first. Will you kindly ask her to come to me?"

"Then this is all you wish to ask me?"

"Thank you, yes. No, one question more. Can you tell me the exact time at which Miss Winnie visited the parlor last night? The young lady herself was very exact on that point."

"That is natural!" I replied, for the great clock at the end of the corridor was striking twelve as she came back to the bedroom. I thought it never would stop."

"That tallies also with Miss Cynthia's testimony. She states that she saw Miss Winnie go to the safe a few minutes before twelve; that she, Miss Cynthia, lay still until the clock struck the quarter, and then examined the safe, finding your money gone."

"Inference (since Miss Winnie apparently noticed nothing out of the way when she looked in): if neither of these young ladies took it, the robbery must have been committed during that fifteen minutes."

"That seems hardly possible," I said, "since Cynthia, Winnie, and I were all awake during that time."

"It is possible, though not probable. Cynthia's bedroom door, opening into the parlor, was closed. Are you quite certain that you did not fall asleep before the quarter struck. Did you hear it?"

"No, I am not at all certain."

"Very good. Then if the thief were standing in the studio waiting for his opportunity, he might have slipped in during that time. Is there any way in which we can ascertain whether any one was in the studio between twelve and a quarter past?"

"I know of no way," I replied. "There was no one in the studio at ten o'clock when I looked in."

"Very good; the known quantities are being gathered in, the unknown ones defined; the problem becomes simpler. I think we will be able to solve it soon. Meantime, if any new developments appear, be so good as to report them to me." He rose and bowed stiffly in token of dismissal. I hurried to our rooms and found Adelaide and Winnie.

"Where is Milly?" I cried; "Mr. Mudge wants to see her next."

"Milly has gone to Madame Celeste's," Adelaide answered. "She wanted to pay a bill."

"But she had no business to leave the house until she had given her testimony," I exclaimed. "I wonder why Madame gave her permission."

"I don't think Milly asked it," Adelaide replied; "and I fancy Milly was not at all anxious to have this interview with the detective and merely caught at Madame Celeste as a way of escape. She is not often in such a twitter of promptness in settling her accounts; besides, now I think of it, all her money was taken. How could she pay Celeste?"

Winnie looked up from the table on which her elbows were resting, her head grasped firmly between her hands as though it ached. She took no part in the conversation until I remarked:

"Well, if Milly thinks to escape Mr. Mudge by running away to Madame Celeste's she is badly taken in, for he is going right over there."

"What?" Winnie almost shrieked. "Does he suspect that she has anything to do with this miserable business?"

"Madame Celeste? No, but he wants to find why Cynthia had her dress charged to Milly's account."

"O Tib, Tib, why did you ever mention that?" Winnie groaned; "you don't know what mischief you have made."

"How did you know it, anyway?" Adelaide asked. "This is the first I have heard of the matter."

"I did not know it," I replied. "Mr. Mudge was looking over the papers he took from Milly's drawer and he came across this bill for Cynthia's dark green cloth dress, charged up against Milly, and I—I just happened to say that was Cynthia's dress——"

"If you could only have just happened to hold your tongue," Winnie exclaimed, springing from her seat and pacing the floor. "Adelaide," she added, "won't you go to Mr. Mudge and keep him busy hearing your testimony until Milly has time to get away from Madame Celeste's. That woman is a match for a lawyer even, but if he happens to meet Milly there she will be frightened into anything. I knew there would be trouble when Mr. Mudge took that bill."

"Of course I will go, if you would like to have me do so," Adelaide replied, rising, "but really, Winnie, I can't say that I at all comprehend the situation."

Winnie gave each of us a look of despair.

"I didn't intend you should," she said, "but since ignorance bungles in this way I will explain. Milly has very weakly been getting things for Cynthia and allowing them to be charged on her bills. I have remonstrated with her and she has promised to do so no more. I told her how wicked it would be to send these accounts in to her father as her own, and she has not done that. She has kept them separate, intending to settle them whenever Cynthia paid up."

"I don't see why Cynthia could not have taken her debts on her own shoulders instead of entangling Milly," Adelaide remarked.

"Simply because Cynthia has no credit. Madame Celeste would not trust her for a penny, while she would let Milly run up any amount. Well, either Cynthia has paid or Milly has obtained the money in some other way. One thing is certain, she has it and she has gone down to pay Madame Celeste; anxious, as you may well imagine, to get her feet out of the quicksand and not by any mischance to have that bill sent home to her father. Now, don't you see that if Mr. Mudge ascertains that Milly has a secret of this kind, that the next thing he will do will be to suspect that Milly stole the

money in order to extricate herself from this trouble."

"Impossible," Adelaide exclaimed. "Milly has only to tell where the money came from."

"And I have asked her and she will not tell. It is all right, she assures me, but she can not or will not tell how."

"Silly goose! I will get it out of her," said Adelaide. "And meantime there is no need whatever that she should be even suspected. She did not do it—and suspicion might as well start out from the first on the right track. I will go at once to Mr. Mudge, and enlighten his benighted mind."

"What is your theory, Adelaide?" I cried, but not before the door had closed behind her.

"Don't stop her," Winnie pleaded. "Time is precious; Mr. Mudge may have tired waiting for Milly and have gone. No matter what her theory is, so long as it takes suspicion from Milly. I had great hopes that Cynthia would succeed in making him think I had done it."

"He did have you in his mind at one time," I said. "He said, 'If neither Miss Winnie nor Miss Cynthia took it, the robbery must have been committed during the fifteen minutes between their visits to the safe!'"

"He said that?" Winnie inquired, with interest.

"Yes, and Winnie, the thing is plain to me—I believe Cynthia took that money." Winnie shook her head.

"Now just listen to my reasoning. Milly has been insisting that Cynthia shall pay up. We know that Cynthia has received no money lately. She stole it and gave it to Milly, and made her promise not to tell who gave it to her. It's as plain as the nose on my face. And then," I continued triumphantly, warming to my conclusion, "she artfully throws the suspicions of the robbery on you, as a revenge for the straightforward talk you gave her. Haven't I ferretted it all out well? Isn't it the most likely way in the world that it could have happened? Are you not perfectly convinced?"

"It is the most likely story," Winnie replied, "and so very feasible does it seem that even I am almost convinced, although I know positively that it did not happen that way, even Cynthia must not be unjustly suspected."

"How do you know it?"

"Because Cynthia told the truth when she said that the money was stolen when she looked into the safe. It was gone when I looked in."

"Winifred! But you told Mr. Mudge that it was there."

"I told Mr. Mudge that I found *my* money just as I left it. It was not touched at all, you know; but yours, Milly's, and a part of Adelaide's, all that was stolen, was already taken."

"But Mr. Mudge did not understand you so."

"That is his own fault."

"Did you want him to misunderstand the situation?"

"Apparently, Tib; but don't ask so many questions. Let him proceed on the assumption that the robbery was committed in that fifteen minutes. If any innocent person is apparently implicated, I will confess. Meantime, you are shocked to find that I am delaying the course of justice in order to keep suspicion from myself."

"A thousand times no; you could never act a lie unless it was to shield some one else. Was it to shield Milly, and how?"

"Tib, it breaks my heart—I can't tell you—I love her so—I love her—"

A great fear came over me; Milly had taken the money and Winnie knew it. But Milly had lost all her money, and yet that was a very transparent subterfuge. What

more natural than that the thief would pretend to be an innocent sufferer and steal from herself? And Milly knew before she looked that there was nothing in her purse. I asked relentlessly, "Was Milly at the safe during the night at some time earlier than you and Cynthia?"

"Milly will not admit that she was," Winnie replied, her manner hardening as she realized that she had not quite disclosed her secret, and her determination to guard it returning with redoubled force.

"Then why do you suspect it?"

"I do not suspect it."

The fixed despair in her eyes added the words, "I know it," as plainly as if she had spoken them.

"Did you see Milly take the money?" I insisted. "Was that what wakened you? And is that the reason why you wish it to appear that the safe was intact at the time you examined it?"

Winnie covered her face with her hands and did not reply. I felt that I had divined the truth. A solemn silence fell upon us both for a few minutes, then Winnie straightened herself with the old resolute look in her face.

"Tib," she said, "I have told you nothing.

You know nothing from your own personal observation, Whatever you may *think* is purely guess-work, and you have no right to imagine evil against Milly. She is the sweetest and dearest girl in our set. She is innocent and unsuspicious, and so kind-hearted that she is easily led. She has gone wrong in some things, terribly wrong; but she is the youngest of us all and it is Cynthia's fault, and I believe she is trying desperately to get straight again. As for this terrible thing, you must not suspect her of it. It is your duty, on the contrary, to try to turn the attention of Mr. Mudge in some other direction."

As she spoke, Cynthia opened the door and Winnie relapsed into silence. I felt a strange, dizzy sensation, as if the foundations were being removed. The more I tried to puzzle out the affair the more bewildered I became. There was Cynthia, who believed that Winnie was the culprit, or at all events was striving to make Mr. Mudge believe so; and when I weighed the evidence the case was strongly against her. Here again was Winnie, who seemed to believe that it was Milly, and I knew that the evidence which could shake her faith in Milly must be overwhelming. I had made it seem entirely clear to myself that

Cynthia had done it, and in a blind, unreasoning way, although Winnie's testimony had showed that this could not possibly be, the suspicion, once started, grew and strengthened. I watched her as she sat working out algebra problems with a disagreeable smile on her face—and I said to myself over and over again, "You did it, and the truth will come out at last."

CHAPTER VI.

HALLOWEEN TRICKS AND WHAT CAME OF THEM.

EVENING was falling when Adelaide returned from her interview with Mr. Mudge.

"Has not Milly returned yet?" she asked, as she entered the door.

"No," replied Winnie. "Has Mr. Mudge gone to interview Celeste?"

"No, he is off on another scent. He has gone to interview Professor Waite."

"What does Professor Waite know about the matter?" I asked in surprise.

"Nothing. It only shows the imbecility of these detectives who insist on pursuing every impossible as well as every possible clew."

"Tell us all about it," I entreated. "I should like to know how it was possible to drag Professor Waite into the business."

"Why, through the transom, of course," Adelaide replied, and we all laughed at the absurd suggestion. "The first question that Mr. Mudge asked was, 'Have you any theory or suspicions in regard to this affair, Miss Armstrong?' I answered that I had determined from the first that it was the act of some sneak-thief, who had watched us, through the transom, put the money into the safe."

Again Winnie made an involuntary movement as though about to speak, but restrained herself, and Adelaide continued:

"I told him about the face at the transom in the Rembrandt hat, and he asked me if it was Professor Waite. I told him that I thought not. The head looked smaller and the hat came lower down over the eyes and at the back than it would have done on the professor. Besides, the professor has that little pointed Paris beard, and this face had a smooth chin. I saw it plainly for a moment in profile. Mr. Mudge did not seem to be satisfied and made me admit that I might have been mistaken. Professor Waite's beard is such a very imma-

ture affair. Then he asked me how an outsider could have introduced himself into the studio without coming in at the front door, which is guarded by the janitor, and coming up the grand staircase past Madame's room and twenty other rooms, all occupied, and likely to have their doors open in the evening. I told him that there were two other ways: the fire escape ——"

"Both the corridor window and our own were locked on the inside," I interrupted.

"He said he found it so—and agreed with me that the turret staircase was the more likely entrance. I explained that the spiral staircase in the turret was built especially for the use of the physician when this part of the building was the infirmary, and that in order to quarantine it from the rest of the school, there were no entrances to the turret on any of the other floors—that it led directly from the studio to the street, and that no one used it but Professor Waite, who kept the key of the outer door; that he might have negligently left this door unlocked, and in that case a tramp could easily have slipped in, and as there was no communication with any other room he would have found himself, on reaching the end of the staircase, in the studio and

in front of our door. Mr. Mudge then questioned me as to Professor Waite's habits. Did he usually spend his evenings in the studio, and were we in the habit of visiting back and forward in a friendly manner through the door with the broken lock? This made me very indignant. Such a thing, I assured Mr. Mudge, would be contrary to the rules of the school, and to the instincts of any self-respecting girl. The door had never been opened since the lock was first broken, and even Tib, whose duties required her to be in the studio during half of the day, always entered it by the corridor door. As to Professor Waite, he did not board in the house. I believed he belonged to several artist clubs—the Salmagundi, the Kit Kat, and others—and that he probably spent his evenings there, or in society, or at his boarding house around the corner; at all events, he never painted in the studio in the evening, for I had heard Tib say that the lighting was not sufficient for night work. There was a rumor, too, that Professor Waite was very popular in society; but that Tib could inform Mr. Mudge much more explicitly than I on all matters relative to the professor's habits, as I had never interested myself in him, and what he did or did not do

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was of no manner of consequence to me. This seemed to amuse Mr. Mudge very much, but he replied politely enough that he had never for an instant imagined that a young artist, like the professor, could be anything else than an object of supreme indifference to any right-minded young lady, and then he proceeded to question me more closely than ever. Though Professor Waite did not usually spend his evenings in the studio, did he not occasionally drop in on his way home? Had we ever heard him ascending or descending the turret stairs at about midnight, for instance. I was obliged to confess that I knew of one instance when he had visited the studio at that hour, for I had met him on the staircase; that he was returning from an evening spent in sketching at the life-class of the Kit Kat Club, and he had run up to the studio to leave his drawings and materials before returning to his room at the boarding house. That it was very possible that he did this frequently. Then, of course, he asked me how it happened that I was going down that staircase at such an unseemly hour on the occasion when I met Professor Waite, and I had to confess all that maddening Halloween business."

We all shouted, for this was a particularly

painful subject with Adelaide. It was the one practical joke which we had ever had the heart to play on our queen.

Such grave consequences attended this Halloween trick that it is possibly worth while for me to turn aside from the direct record of the robbery and devote a chapter or two to a confession of one of our most serious scrapes.

It had been suggested by Cynthia and approved and carried out by Winnie before the days of the breaking off of their friendship. Cynthia had a way of suggesting plots for less cautious people to carry out, whereby they burned their fingers like the cat in the fable of the chestnuts.

The Amen Corner had conducted itself with praiseworthy propriety after the opening escapade of the season—that of the roller-coaster trunk—for the space of a few weeks. But when Halloween came we all felt the need of what Winnie called an explosion. We had been too preternaturally goody-goody, and the escape valve must be opened. We decided to celebrate the eve of "antics and of fooleries" befittingly, and we arranged to bob for apples, to snatch raisins from burning alcohol, thereby ascertaining the number of our future lovers.

We tied our garters around our feet
And crossed our stockings under our head;
We turned our shoes toward the street
And dreamed of the ones we were going to wed.

We poured molten lead into water, striving to ascertain the occupation of our future husbands from the forms which it took. Adelaide's emblem was something like a letter A, and we all declared that it was a perfect easel and quite wonderful; but when we threw apple peelings over our heads, Milly's broke into two sections, remotely resembling a scrawling C and a W. Milly herself was the first to recognize the letters and to blushingly declare that of course it was too absurd, it could not mean Carrington Waite.

Adelaide's younger brother Jim was attending the cadet school in the city. He admired Milly exceedingly, as did many of the cadets who had met her at a fair given at Madame's, the previous year, for the benefit of the Home of the Elder Brother. Stacey Fitz Simmons, drum major of the cadet band, and the best dodger and runner of the school foot-ball team, was also her devoted admirer. The button which Mr. Mudge had discovered in Milly's bureau drawer was not from a West Point uniform but from Stacey's; and the foot-ball team was not the Harvard—but the Cadet

Eleven. We all tried to find emblems in the molten lead, or initials in the apple parings, suggesting the cadets, but Milly would none of them.

There was a Mr. Van Silver, much favored by Milly's family, a caller at their cottage at Narragansett Pier, whom Adelaide had met while visiting Milly the previous summer. He was principally remarkable for owning a coach and four-in-hand, and as he had on one occasion invited Adelaide to a seat on the box, it was a little fiction of Milly's that Mr. Van Silver was her humble slave. But we were all innocent in the ways of flirtations and, with the exception of Milly, heart whole and fancy free, and it was really a difficult thing to conjure up imaginary lovers—for the occasion.

The *pièce de resistance* of the evening was the trick played upon Adelaide. We planned on our programme that just as the clock struck the hour of midnight we would all try the experiment of walking downstairs backward with a lighted candle in one hand and a looking-glass in the other. Of course it would never do for the procession to file down the grand staircase in front of Madame's rooms, but the spiral staircase, secluded in the turret,

offered peculiar advantages for the scheme. It communicated with no other floor, only Professor Waite had the key to the door at the foot, and he was never in the studio at night. So the girls believed, until I informed them that he always came in for a few moments on Wednesday nights to leave his sketches made at the Kit Kat — and Halloween that year happened to fall upon a Wednesday.

"So much the better," said Cynthia. "We will make Adelaide head the procession, and she will see Professor Waite's face in her mirror. It will be too good a joke for anything, for she can't bear the sight of him since she made that unfortunate speech when she saw him standing in the open door and thought it was Winnie *en masquerade.*"

"I am afraid it will be twitting on facts," I said; "for I more than half suspect that Professor Waite admires Adelaide as much as she detests him. He has asked me more than once why she does not join the drawing class— and even suggested that I should induce her to pose for the portrait class. He said her profile was purely classical, and that she took naturally the most superb poses of any girl that he had ever met."

"So much the better," Cynthia declared.

"It will be the best joke of the season. What time does he usually arrive?"

He said, in telling one of the class, that he always leaves the Kit Kat at half past eleven, and reaches the street door of the turret on the stroke of twelve."

"Delightful!" exclaimed Winnie. "Fortune favors our plans. What fun it will be!"

It was thought best not to admit Milly into our confidence, for fear that she could not keep the secret. All went well. We played our tricks and Winnie told ghost stories, but it seemed as if midnight would never come. At one time we fancied we heard a noise in the turret and we looked at each other apprehensively. Had anything happened to bring Professor Waite back earlier than usual, and would our plans miscarry, after all? At ten minutes before twelve we organized the procession. Milly was timid and persisted in being in the middle. To our disgust Adelaide refused to lead. "Winnie proposes it; let Winnie go first," she said resolutely.

"All right," Winnie assented, after a thoughtful pause. "I will if Adelaide will come next."

Cynthia and I looked at her inquiringly.

We did not quite see how this would answer.

"Tib, let's go and see if Snooks is in bed and the coast is clear," Winnie suggested. "It's a pity that we can't get into the studio through this door, but that chest is too heavy for us to push aside."

Winnie and I reconnoitered, and as we opened the door into the turret she told me her plan.

"I will lead rapidly and when I get to the bottom will scud into that little closet under the stairs where they keep the lawn mower, so that Adelaide will be virtually at the head. We must start right away, so as to give me a chance to get into my haven of refuge before Professor Waite arrives."

We all tiptoed into the studio and lighted our candles there, after we had closed the corridor door. We had had quite a time collecting mirrors. Adelaide and Milly possessed handsome silver-backed hand-glasses. Winnie carried a pretty toilet mirror with three folding leaves. I had a work box with looking-glass inside the lid, and Cynthia had unscrewed the large mirror from her bureau. We were all giggling and shivering when Winnie, our marshal, gave the signal for the start in the follow-

ing order: Winnie, Adelaide, Milly, myself, and Cynthia bringing up the rear.

The steps winding around the central pillar were narrower at one end than the other and it was rather difficult to tread them backward. The fall wind blew through the slits of unglazed windows and extinguished my candle. Winnie, in her haste to get to the bottom, fell, extinguished hers also, and hurt herself quite severely, but she had determination enough to pick herself up again and limp on. Suddenly there came a strong draught of air and there was a halt in our march. Milly whispered that she could hear voices, then Adelaide, who was a little way in advance, shrieked and came running up the stairs. We were all huddled together in a jam. Cynthia was shouting with laughter, Milly crying with fright, Adelaide choking and incoherent with indignation.

"Hurry, hurry!" she cried, pushing us back; "he is coming; he is just behind me."

We were only a few steps from the studio and we all bundled in—but in the confusion Milly had dropped her candle, and the light Mother Hubbard wrapper was all in a blaze.

Cynthia rushed wildly out of the room. I have no recollection of what I did, but Ade-

laide fought the flames with her hands; but she would never have conquered them, and our darling might have died a cruel death in torturing flames, if Professor Waite had not dashed into the room, wrapped her in a Persian rug, and extinguished the fire. Strange to say, she was entirely unhurt. Only her beautiful blond hair was singed, and that was afterward attributed by her friends to an injudicious use of the curling irons. Adelaide's hands were badly burned and Professor Waite bathed them in oil, while an older, serious looking man, who had followed Professor Waite, whom we only noticed at this stage of the proceedings, wrapped them in his white silk muffler. Then Cynthia appeared at the door with a white face and a small water pitcher, and we were able for the first time to laugh in a hysterical way. Fortunately, no one had heard us, and we slipped back to the Amen Corner.

Milly was awe-stricken by the peril through which she had passed, but there was a strange, happy look upon her face which I did not understand until, as I tucked her away in bed, she pulled me down to her and whispered in my ear:

"He held me in his arms, Tib; for one

heavenly minute he held me close, close in his arms. I felt the hot breath of the flames, but I did not care. I was willing to die, I was so happy——"

"My poor little girl," I said, as I kissed her, "you must not let yourself care for Professor Waite, for he does not——"

"I know," she replied, "he loves Adelaide; he can't help it any more than I can help——"

"Hush," I said "this is all foolishness; put it right out of your little head. You are only sixteen; you are not old enough to care for any one. You will laugh at this by and by."

She shook her head solemnly. "I shall always remember, Tib—that for one heavenly minute he held me tight—so." And she embraced her pillow with all her small might, nestling her hot cheek against it in a way which would have been absurd if it had not been so unspeakably pathetic.

Adelaide strode into the room at this juncture with the air of a tragedy queen.

"Thank Heaven, you are safe, Milly dear!" she said, pausing beside the bed, but her look was not one of pious thanksgiving. Her voice had a sharp sound, and a crimson spot

flamed on her dark cheeks. "He dared to hold my hands in his," she murmured, "and, worse still, to call me 'noble girl,' and his 'poor child'; and he will think that I went down those stairs on purpose to see his face in my mirror. Oh, how I hate him, how I hate him!"

CHAPTER VII.

A STATE OF "DREADFULNESS."

MISS NOAKES had not heard us, but our troubles were not over.

It was not until I had helped Adelaide to retire (for her poor hands were too badly burned to put up her own hair), and had gone away into my own room that I realized that Winnie was not with us and that she had been left behind in the stampede up the turret stairs. I crept around through the corridor into the darkened studio. Professor

Waite and his friend had gone, why had not Winnie returned? I opened the door leading to the turret and called her name softly. I was answered by a groan. I hastened to light a candle and stole down the winding stair. Half way down I found Winnie sitting on the steps, a bundle of misery.

"I came up once," she exclaimed, "but Professor Waite was in the studio and I had to go back to the closet and wait until he left the house."

"It must have been very chilly and unpleasant with nothing but a watering can and a lawn mower to sit on," I remarked; "but why didn't you come all the way up this time. You surely don't intend to spend the night where you are."

"I don't know," Winnie replied, with another groan; "I've sprained my ankle or something, and I can't bear my weight on it. It was all that I could do to drag myself up and back again, and then as far as this. Ow! how it hurts! No, I just cannot take another step."

"Dear! dear!" I exclaimed; "what a night this has been! With Milly's narrow escape from death, and Adelaide's burned hands, and your sprained ankle, we have had enough Halloween for one year."

"What do you mean?" Winnie asked, in her absorption taking several little hops up the stairs. "Milly's escape? What has happened? Ow! wow! You'll have to get a derrick, Tib, and hoist me up. I cannot budge an inch."

"Lean on me," I said, "and listen while I tell you all about it"; and I rehearsed the thrilling story of Professor Waite's rescue.

"I can smell the smoke still. Snooks will think the house is on fire," Winnie declared, snuffing vigorously as we reached the studio. "You had better open the windows a bit and air off. And there are some burned scraps of Milly's wrapper on the floor; let's pick them all up. Ow! don't let go of me. This is really what Milly calls a state of dreadfulness—no other word will describe it. How can I ever stand it until morning?"

I helped her to her bed and bound up her ankle with Pond's Extract; but it had swollen so much and was so painful that when morning came Winnie consented to have the school physician called. He kindly asked no questions, and treated Adelaide's hands, only remarking, "I see you have been celebrating Halloween."

"He thinks I burned them in snatching the

raisins out of the lighted alcohol," Adelaide said; "or perhaps in putting out some clothing which was set on fire in that way."

Even Madame was considerate and did not inquire closely into the details of the trouble.

"I hope you have learned from this," she said, "that it is a dangerous thing to play with fire."

Halloween was a disagreeable subject after this to all of us, but especially to Winnie. "Don't mention it," she would say. "I shall never play another trick in all my mortal days. I feel as mean and demoralized as a lunch-basket on its way home from a picnic."

The state of dreadfulness deepened as time went on. Winnie kept her room for days, and it was necessary to feed Adelaide at table, and dress and undress her; but their hurts troubled me less than the heart bruise received by my poor Milly. I kept her secret and she was brave, and no one else suspected it. Professor Waite was very impatient with her, treating her work contemptuously, and disregarding her personally altogether. He never alluded to the accident, treating it, as Winnie said, as of no more consequence than if he had extinguished a bale of cotton that had happened to take fire.

"That man is utterly incapable of sentiment," Winnie remarked wrathfully. "Now how natural it would be to make a romance out of such a rescue, but Professor Waite's heart is as stony as that of the Apollo Belvedere."

Milly smiled piteously and shook her head, while she looked significantly from me toward Adelaide, as much as to say: "We know better; he is not so stony-hearted as he seems."

Having my attention directed to the matter, I kept my eyes open for little indications of the state of Professor Waite's sentiments, and presently found that they were not lacking. The studio was not occupied by classes until after ten o'clock in the morning, and Professor Waite came every day very early, and painted there alone until the first wave of pupils swept in and filled the room with an encampment of easels. He explained to me that he was preparing a picture for the Academy exhibition, the morning light was good, and as his studio in the city was shared with another young artist, he preferred to come here where he could work quietly and undisturbed for a few hours each morning. He always bolted the corridor door to secure com-

plete seclusion, and we had often to wait a few moments until he admitted us. He did not show us the painting, but it was evident that he was deeply interested in it, for he was frequently distraught, and apparently vexed at being obliged to turn his attention to our offences against art, just as he was worked up to a fine phrensy of production. At such times he would run his fingers through his hair, and stare at the work which the first unfortunate pupil presented with a repugnance which was often more clearly than politely expressed. Sometimes his ill humour vented itself on the model. We were in the habit of taking turns and, dressed in some picturesque costume, of posing for the class for a week at a time. After the Halloween experience it happened to be Milly's turn. We had costumed her as an Italian contadina, and thought that she looked very prettily. But Professor Waite was not satisfied.

"Why have you chosen a blonde for such a character?" he asked me impatiently. "That little snub nose and milk-and-water complexion have nothing Italian in their make up. If you could induce that superb creature, Miss Armstrong, to wear the costume, you would see the difference."

Milly had heard the remark though he did not intend she should do so, and her eyes suffused with tears as usual. "I will ask Adelaide," she said meekly, "but I don't believe she will be willing to pose for the class."

"Never mind the class," Professor Waite replied eagerly. "If Miss Armstrong will honor me by giving me personally a few sittings each morning for my Academy picture I shall be more gratified than I can express."

Milly, more than happy to attempt to do the professor a favor, besought Adelaide, who was obdurate and even indignant.

"The very idea!" she exclaimed. "I never heard of such assurance. *I* figure in his picture at a public exhibition, indeed."

"Why, I am sure it's a great honor," Milly replied, bridling feebly; "and I won't have you treat him in such a *desultory* manner."

We all laughed, for Milly, as usual when excited, had mixed her words—insulting and derogatory clamoring at the same time in her small mind for utterance.

"I think it would be perfectly scrum to be in an Academy picture," Winnie exclaimed. "I wish he would ask me."

Perfectly "scrum," or "scrumptious," was Winnie's superlative; while Adelaide, to ex-

press a similar delight, would have quoted the Anglicism, "Quite too far more than most awfully delicious."

"I wonder what his Academy picture is, anyway," Winnie went on, "and why he never shows it to us. I mean to ask him to let me see it; I am sure I might help him with some suggestions."

"Well you *are* unassuming," I exclaimed, never dreaming that Winnie, with all her audacity, would dare to criticise a picture by our professor. What was my astonishment, therefore, on awakening the next morning, to find that Winnie was already dressed.

"I am going into the studio," she remarked coolly, "to take a look at Professor Waite's picture before he arrives."

"O Winnie!" I begged, "don't; you've no business to do such a thing." Winnie made a little face, courtesied, and flounced out of the room. She returned presently, all aglow with excitement.

"He was already there at work," she exclaimed, "painting, as the French say, like an *enragé*. He had forgotten to bolt the door and I slipped right in. His back was toward me, and he did not notice me at first, so I had one good solid look. And what do you suppose it is,

Tib? Why, Adelaide, holding a candle and glancing over her shoulder as he must have seen her going down the stairs. The Rembrandtesque effect of artificial light and deep shadow is stunning. He has rigged up his lay-figure on the landing in the dark turret, and had a lighted candle wedged into her woodeny fingers, so that he gets the lighting on the face and drapery, while he has daylight on his canvas.

"Of course he has had to do the face from imagination or memory, but it was perfect. I screamed right out: 'Don't touch that again or you'll spoil it!' He turned the canvas back forward quicker than a wink, and looked at me as if he would like to eat me, but I didn't care, and I begged him not to disturb himself or interrupt his work on my account; that I had only dropped in in a friendly way to give him a little helpful criticism. With that he put on his eye-glasses and remarked; 'Well, you *are* about the coolest young lady that it has ever been my privilege to meet,' but he had to come right down from that nifty position, for I said, 'If my opinions are of no use, perhaps Madame's will be more helpful; shall I ask her to come up and take a look at the picture?' That made him wince. He turned all

sorts of colors, chewed his mustache, and hadn't a word to say. I felt sort of sorry for him and I assured him that I had no intention of telling, at least not if he was nice; and I reminded him that he owed the subject to me in the first place, for if I had not suggested the trick he would never have seen Adelaide in that particular lighting. With that he changed his tune and said that he was very grateful for my kind intention, and that if I would kindly lend him a photograph of Adelaide he would be still more grateful. But I told him that I did not think that it was fair to exhibit a portrait of Adelaide, and he admitted that it was not, and said that he had decided not to send the picture to the exhibition, but merely to keep it himself."

Adelaide happened to knock at our door at this juncture, and Winnie told her what she had discovered.

"This is past endurance," Adelaide exclaimed angrily; "you must come with me, Tib, and insist on Professor Waite's showing me this picture. If the face is recognizable as my portrait I shall destroy it then and there."

"Don't, Adelaide," I begged. "Professor Waite is a gentleman; he has already told

Winnie that he does not intend to exhibit the picture——"

"But I do not chose that he shall possess it," she cried; "if you will not go with me I shall go alone," and she hurried to the studio door. It was locked, and Professor Waite did not choose to reply to her oft-repeated knocks. He evidently considered Winnie's visit all-sufficient for one morning. Adelaide came back in a towering passion. "If my poor hands would only let me write," she exclaimed, "I would give him such a piece of my mind. Winnie, be my amanuensis. Write what I dictate."

Winnie sat down good-humoredly and dashed off in her large scrawling script, which filled a page with these lines, the following indignant protest:

PROFESSOR WAITE:

I regret that I consider the liberty you have taken in painting my portrait for the Academy Exhibition, without my knowledge or consent, a dishonorable act of which no gentleman would be guilty, and I demand that you destroy it instantly.

ADELAIDE ARMSTRONG.

She was excited and she spoke loudly. When she finished, there was dead silence in the little parlor. We all felt that Adelaide had put it a little too strongly. That silence

was broken by a half-suppressed sneeze on the balcony outside the window. A sneeze which we all recognized as belonging to Miss Noakes. Had she been listening? Had she heard? Winnie balanced the ink bottle over the letter ready to obliterate its contents by an "accident" if Miss Noakes suddenly knocked. No one appeared, and going to the window a moment afterward, I saw Miss Noakes walking between her window and ours, and taking in great sniffs of the keen morning air with much apparent enjoyment.

The bell rang for breakfast and Adelaide and I walked along together, pausing to slip the note under the studio door. It would not go quite through, a little end protruding, but that did not strike us as of any consequence. I had descended one flight of stairs when I found that I had forgotten my geometry and I hastened back to get it. I met Winnie before I turned into the corridor. "Hurry," she exclaimed, "Snooks is just leaving her door; she will mark you for tardiness." I flew along at the top of my speed, but on reaching our corridor I saw a sight which suddenly arrested my footsteps. Miss Noakes stood before the studio door, carefully adjusting her eye-glasses and looking at the note; presently she stooped,

picked it up, and read the address. She hesitated a moment, seemed half inclined to replace it, turned it over as though she wished to open it, then glancing down the hall and spying me, she placed it in the great leather bag which hung at her side. She closed the bag with a savage click and glared at me as I turned and fled, for I had not the courage to meet her.

I reported the calamity at breakfast table in an awe-stricken whisper to Milly, who turned a trifle pale.

"I am afraid it will get Professor Waite into trouble," she said, "Adelaide is still very angry with him, but I am sure she does not want to make him lose his position in the school."

"It may make her lose her own position," Cynthia Vaughn suggested. "Writing notes to young men is against the rules. It's an expellable offence. But then," she added, "this wasn't exactly a love letter."

"I should think not," I exclaimed.

"It's all the worse," Milly groaned, as she scalded her throat with hot coffee.

"Adelaide can say she didn't write it, you know," Cynthia suggested cheerfully. "Winnie wrote it; and she didn't poke it under the door either—Tib did that."

"Do you suppose, Cynthia Vaughn, that Adelaide would do such a mean thing as not to take the consequences of her own actions?" Milly asked indignantly. Then she clasped my hand, for Miss Noakes stood at Madame's table, and had opened her black bag and was handing Madame the note. We could see even at that distance that the seal was unbroken, but this gave us scant comfort; it was only putting off the evil day.

"Winnie might steal that note for us," Cynthia suggested, "before Madame has a chance to read it."

"Why are you always thinking up scrapes for Winnie to get into?" Milly asked.

Winnie pricked her ears, at the other side of the table. "What about Winnie?" she asked.

"Nothing," Milly replied shortly; but as we went up to the studio a little before ten o'clock, I explained the situation. To my surprise Winnie's eyes danced with merriment. "Snooks listened," she exclaimed, "she heard Adelaide, I knew she did, and now we know how she finds out things that happen in the Amen Corner; often and often I have thought that I heard her, and have opened the door quickly only to find the corridor empty. Of

course she is smart enough to know that she would get caught if she listened at the door; she would never in the world have time enough to scuttle down to her own room before we would see her. But the balcony! Strange we never thought of that. I'll lay a trap for her—no, I need not; she has trapped herself; this affair is proof enough that she peeks and listens."

"But I don't see how this helps us," I exclaimed. "This is the worst scrape of the season. Don't you see it is? Such glee on your part is positively idiotic. We may all be expelled and Professor Waite too."

"Fret not your dear little sympathetic, apprehensive gizzard. Don't say one word, except to answer questions. Don't volunteer any confessions, or let Adelaide do so. Remember, the prisoner is not obliged to criminate himself, the burden of proof lies with Snooks, and she will find it a pretty heavy burden."

"Not with that note!" I replied.

"That note! Ha! ha! But I won't tell you. It's too good a joke."

"And Professor Waite's picture of Adelaide?"

"The picture, I had forgotten that," and

Winnie became grave at once. "He must take it right away," she added. "I will tell him to."

"You talk as if you could make him do anything," I said.

"Anything I choose to try," Winnie replied confidently. We were at the studio door a little ahead of time, and Professor Waite threw it open at our knock, and welcomed us in with his palette still on his thumb. "Come and see my picture," he said, with a smile.

"Poor man!" I thought, "he would not look so happy if he knew how angry Adelaide is, and what a mine is waiting to be exploded beneath him."

He led us to the easel and displayed the canvas triumphantly.

It was an effective, striking picture, but it did not in the least resemble Adelaide.

Winnie uttered an exclamation of disgust. "There now, you've spoiled it. I knew you would. It was just perfect, and you've ruined it. I'm sure I never want to look at that thing again. I told you not to touch it. Why couldn't you let it alone?" and a half dozen other wails of the same order.

Professor Waite did not attempt to put a

stop to her somewhat impertinent remarks. He was plainly annoyed, however, and when she had emptied the vials of her indignation, he replied: "I thought you would approve of the change, Miss DeWitt. It was a remark of yours this morning which made me realize that I had no right to paint Miss Armstrong's portrait without her permission; that probably she would be unwilling that I should possess it; and as I would gladly sacrifice any ambition or pleasure of my own for the sake of not offending her, I have, as you see, painted in an entirely new face."

"You are quite right, Professor," I exclaimed warmly; "and Adelaide will be grateful for your consideration."

At this juncture the girls trooped in and took their places at their easels, and Professor Waite laid the picture in the great chest in front of our door. The correction of work went on as usual until the latter part of the hour, when an ominous knock was heard at the door, and Madame, accompanied by Miss Noakes, sailed majestically into the room. Professor Waite bowed deeply and expressed himself as highly honored. Madame lifted her lorgnette and surveyed the class. Milly was posing in her despised Italian costume.

Madame smiled kindly at her, and then passed about from easel to easel examining the girls' work. "I do not know whether it is exactly the thing for the young ladies to allow themselves to be painted in this way," she said, "though to be sure the studies are hardly recognizable as likenesses."

"The young ladies have all asked the permission of their parents to sit for each other," Professor Waite explained.

"For each other," Madame repeated doubtfully; "but do you never make sketches of them also, Professor? A parent might well object to having his daughter's portrait exhibited in a public place, sold to a stranger, or even shown among studies of professional models in your studio."

"I have made no studies from life from any of the young ladies," Professor Waite replied promptly.

Miss Noakes drew a long breath and seemed to bristle with anticipated triumph.

"I am glad that you can assure me of this," Madame replied in her softest, most purring accents. Then she glanced around the room again and asked, "Are all of the art students present? I do not see Miss Armstrong."

"Miss Armstrong has not honoured me by

joining the class," Professor Waite replied stiffly.

"But she at least sits for the others, does she not? She is such a strikingly picturesque girl, I should think you would ask her."

"We have asked her," Milly replied, "but she is just as obstinate as she can be. I wish, Madame, you would make her."

Madame shook her little wiry curls. "This is a matter which must be left entirely to individual preference, my dear. It would be very wrong, indeed, for any of you to make a portrait of Miss Armstrong without her consent. I have known young amateur photographers to lay themselves open to an action at law by taking photographs of people without their knowledge. Our personality is a very sacred thing, and whoever possesses himself of that without warrant commits a dishonorable action."

Milly looked as if she were about to faint, while Professor Waite, who felt the intention of Madame's remarks, and his own thoughtlessness, bit his mustache nervously. Winnie was tittering in an unseemly manner behind her easel, but, thankful as I was that the professor had changed the portrait, I still felt the gravity of the occasion.

Madame's manner changed. "Miss Vaughn," she said to Cynthia, "will you ask Miss Armstrong to step to the studio for a moment." Then turning to our teacher, she added, "I have a very painful duty to perform, my dear Professor, and you must pardon me if my questions seem to you unwarranted. Will you tell me whether, for any reason whatever, you have carried on a written correspondence with Miss Armstrong or with any other member of this school?"

"I have not, Madame."

"Have never either written to her or received letters from her?"

"Never, Madame. Who has charged me with such a clandestine and dishonourable act?"

Madame did not reply, for Adelaide entered the room. She was very stately and pale. Cynthia had not had far to go, and Adelaide had come instantly.

"Why have you sent for me?" she asked resolutely.

"Merely to ask you one or two simple questions," Madame replied. "But first, Professor, may we be permitted to see the picture which you are preparing for the Academy exhibition?"

Adelaide leaned forward eagerly. Professor Waite was about to be punished for his presumption and yet she was not so glad as she fancied that she would be. Her anger had faded out and she almost pitied him. A hot blush swept up to his forehead as he felt her gaze, and silently placed the painting upon the easel. Madame examined it critically through her lorgnette; it was evidently not what she had expected to see.

Milly, who had not known of the change, could hardly believe her eyes, and seemed to fancy that a miracle had been performed to save her dear professor. Miss Noakes stood at the canvas with a look of disappointed malignity on her unattractive features.

"Is this the only picture which you intend to exhibit?" Madame asked, after a moment, during which she had assured herself that the face on the canvas was utterly unlike any of her pupils.

"It is the only one that I have had time to paint this season," Professor Waite replied. "The face bore at one time a resemblance to Miss Armstrong's, but I purposely destroyed that resemblance and shall send it in as you see it."

Madame seemed somewhat relieved, but

she turned toward Adelaide, who had seated herself and was staring at the picture, her heart filled with a vague regret that she had written so unkind a letter.

"Young ladies," said Madame solemnly, "you have heard the questions which I have asked Professor Waite. Certain accusations have been made which have greatly troubled me. It has been suspected that a clandestine flirtation and correspondence has for some time been carried on between your professor and one of the members of this school. Hitherto I have paid no attention to these reports, as they rested only on suspicion, but this morning startling evidence has been produced, and before bringing it forward I call upon any young lady who has been guilty of such an indiscretion to anticipate the discovery of her fault by a full confession." No one responded. The accusation was so much more serious than the truth, that Adelaide did not imagine that she was the suspected culprit. Dead silence, in the midst of which Madame produced the fateful letter. Adelaide started and Madame asked in awful tones:

"Will any young lady present acknowledge that she has written this letter?"

Winnie and Adelaide each rose promptly.

Madame frowned. "Have we two claimants?" she asked.

"I am responsible for the contents of that note," said Adelaide.

"But I wrote it," added Winnie, "and I demand that it be read aloud."

It seemed to me that Winnie was absolutely insane, and even Adelaide seemed to feel that there was no necessity of rushing so recklessly on the spears of the enemy.

Professor Waite looked completely mystified, and Madame said very seriously:

"You will see, Professor, that this note is directed to you, and that it has not been opened. I could not take that liberty; but Miss Noakes discovered it being sent in a very irregular manner, which justified her in confiscating it. There are other suspicious matters connected with it, which I trust its contents will fully explain."

I felt that the crucial moment had arrived. Miss Noakes was absolutely radiant, and sat rubbing her hands with ghoulish glee. Madame looked troubled but judicial. The professor was a favourite of hers, but Miss Noakes had brought too weighty an accusation to be glossed over.

A silence like that before a thunder-clap reigned. Winnie covered her face with her handkerchief and shook—could it be with suppressed laughter? If so, it seemed to me that she must be going insane.

Professor Waite opened the letter and glanced over its contents. "This note is from Miss Winifred De Witt," he said to Madame, "and since I have her permission, I will read it aloud." And to our utter astonishment, Professor Waite read—not the indignant letter which Adelaide had dictated, but the following:

PROFESSOR WAITE.

Dear Sir: May I have your permission to place my easel on the balcony in front of the corridor window and make a study of a sunrise effect as seen across the roofs? The view is so very beautiful that Miss Noakes spends much of her time there absorbed in its enjoyment.

Very respectfully yours,

WINIFRED DE WITT.

Professor Waite politely handed this effusion to Madame. Miss Noakes snatched it from her hand and glared at it with the look of a foiled assassin. Madame bit her lips with annoyance and scowled at Miss Noakes. She was evidently angry with her for having caused her to arraign Professor Waite on insufficient testimony and creating a scene de-

rogatory to her own dignity. She quickly recovered her self-possession, however, and remarked loftily:

"Miss De Witt, when you have any future communications to make with your professor, pray do so in a more fitting manner. Placing notes under doors is really unworthy of any young lady in my school."

"So is listening at windows," Cynthia whispered to Winnie. Madame turned to Professor Waite and expressed herself as much pleased that this very serious accusation had been proved to be founded on an entire mistake. She had herself felt perfect confidence in the integrity of Professor Waite and the propriety of her pupils throughout the entire affair, and had only investigated it to give the slander its proper refutation: and her stiff silk dress rustled with dignity out of the studio.

As for Miss Noakes, she simply disappeared, "evaporated," as Milly expressed it. The door had hardly closed upon Madame before our long-repressed feelings found vent in laughter. Winnie congratulated Professor Waite on the part of the school that he had been found innocent of so heinous a crime. The girls swarmed up to shake hands with him.

Those who could not grasp his hand shook the skirts of his coat. Exuberant confusion reigned. Milly was dissolved in happy tears, and even Adelaide smiled when Professor Waite expressed his regret that Miss Noakes had connected their names in so disagreeable a manner.

It was not until the occupants of the Amen Corner had gathered in their study parlor that Adelaide said:

"But I really do not understand what became of my note; the one I dictated to Winnie and tucked under the door."

"Winnie, how did you manage to steal it?" Cynthia asked.

"I didn't take it from Snooks," Winnie replied. "It struck me that Adelaide had expressed herself rather strongly, and that she would regret it after she had cooled down, and if she didn't, she ought to. So while you were investigating the eavesdropping I destroyed that note, wrote one of my own and sealed it up in its place."

"And I've really put this note of yours under the door?" Adelaide asked.

"Yes, my dear, and that is why I have not shared Tib's anxiety since we knew that it had been confiscated. Don't you think that dig

about Snooks enjoying the scenery of the back yard was rather good?" and Winnie chuckled with enjoyment of her own impertinence. "You should have seen her face when Professor Waite read that. Nebuchadnezzar's when he ordered Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego to the burning, fiery furnace must have been amiable in comparison. She would have seen me boiled in oil with pleasure. I haven't enjoyed anything so much for ages."

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE MESHES OF A GOLDEN NET.

OF course Adelaide did not feel it necessary to tell Mr. Mudge all the consequences of our Halloween party, but only the facts of our having used the turret staircase on that memorable night.

"And now," she said, with a laugh, "Mr. Mudge has gone racing off to investigate Professor Waite. I seem doomed to get that poor man into trouble. Though of course he never could be suspected of this robbery."

Milly had entered while Adelaide was speaking, and she uttered a little cry of dis-

may. "Professor Waite suspected! that could never be!"

"Circumstances are against him," Winnie replied. "Mr. Mudge believes that the robbery was committed between twelve o'clock and a quarter past. Now, if Professor Waite was in the studio at that time——"

"He was earlier than usual," Milly replied. "I heard him come up the staircase. You know the head of our bed is right against the turret wall. Someway, I always hear his step on the stair, and then he usually whistles an air from one of the operas. Last night he whistled the Wedding March in "Lohengrin."

"Then you were lying awake, too, last night," Winnie remarked. "Did you hear me moving about in this room?"

"Yes," Milly replied hesitatingly.

"Why didn't you say so before?"

"There didn't seem to be any necessity of telling of it," Milly replied.

"You thought it might throw suspicion on me?"

"Oh, no," Milly disclaimed. "No one could suspect you, Winnie, or Professor Waite, either; the ideas are equally absurd."

"Unless it is proved that the robbery was committed before Professor Waite came

up the stairs, it may not seem at all absurd to Mr. Mudge," Winnie continued mercilessly. "Tib and I saw him examining the door into the studio, and he seemed possessed with the idea that the burglar entered the room from the studio. I know, too, that Mr. Mudge examined Professor Waite's tool chest in the studio, and that he found the broken lock in it, with a screw-driver and other tools, showing that Professor Waite had been tinkering with the door, trying unsuccessfully to mend the lock, as we all know."

"You know this! How did you find it out?" Adelaide asked, and Winnie replied:

"Professor Waite wanted to use his screw-driver and went to his tool chest after it during the painting lesson to-day. It was gone; so was the lock to the door. He hunted everywhere, and told me that he was afraid that Miss Noakes had been in his studio and had discovered the broken lock, and that we would be called in question for that old scrape. I felt sure from the first that it was Mr. Mudge, but I did not mention him, for Madame told us to say nothing about the robbery outside of our own circle."

"I would do anything to keep Professor Waite out of trouble," Milly said. "I am

the only one who knows that he was in the studio, and I will not tell."

"Nothing will help Professor Waite so much as the entire truth," Winnie replied. "Of course he is not the one who took the money. If the person really responsible can be discovered, or will confess, the Professor and all other innocent persons will be cleared from suspicion."

"Of course," Milly replied, looking at Winnie in a puzzled way. "And I am sure," she added hopefully, "that Mr. Mudge will find the guilty individual soon, if he is as keen as you all seem to think him. I really dread meeting him, and I am glad he has gone away for to-day. There goes the supper bell. What a long day this has been!"

After supper Milly woke to a consciousness that she had not prepared one of her lessons for the next day. She sat puckering her pretty forehead into ugly wrinkles, and repeating helplessly, "'Populi Romani!' I am sure I've had that before." Then she began a wild attempt at translation, with manifold running comments. "'Because Ariovistus, King of the Germans, had sat down on their boundaries—' Now, was there anything ever

so absurd as that? Why did old Ariovistus want to sit down on their boundaries?"

"Perhaps the word doesn't mean boundaries here," Adelaide suggested, and Milly turned patiently to her lexicon— "If *finibus* comes from *finitimus* it may mean neighbors—and then Ariovistus sat down on his neighbors; well I must say that was cool——"

Milly worked on for a little while in silence, and then exclaimed, "I'm getting into the sensibility of it now—how's this? 'These things having been known, Cæsar confirmed the mind of all Gaul with words.' He was always very generous of his words. We have a review to-morrow, and the ridiculosity of the whole thing comes out. Now just listen to this: 'Wherefore it pleased him to send legates to Ariovistus, who should ask him to appoint some place in the middle of the others for a colloquy. To these legates he responded if it was too much trouble for him to come to himself, himself would come to him and he—Cæsar—would then find out who ought to do the coming. Besides, he would admire to see all Gaul in a row, and it was no business of Cæsar's or his old Populo Romano.' I rather like his pluck but I'm afraid my translation is rather free. Then

here is a place that I am not quite sure about; 'The Helvetians, the Tulingians, and the Lotobigians, and all the other igians, in their boundaries or something, whence they had something else—he commanded to—thing-ummy; and because all their fruits were—were—frost bitten, I guess, and at home nothing was which could tolerate hunger—he commanded the other ninkums that they should make for them copious corn—' I perfectly hate Cæsar. He was always boasting of his own benefits and clemency to one tribe in making another support it, and then 'pacifying' the other tribes by slaying a few thousand of their soldiers, and I just don't see the use of our muddling our heads with what that stupid, cruel, conceited old bandit did, anyhow. But if I don't know this lesson I shall not be able to pass in examination, and you will all graduate and leave me behind for ages and ages——"

Ordinarily Winnie could not have resisted such an appeal as this. I have known her to patiently translate all of Milly's lessons for her, and then as patiently explain them to her over and over again, until some faint idea of their meaning had penetrated her befogged little brain. And having spent the evening thus,

go unprepared to her geometry, and stoically receive a cipher as her class mark, and see Cynthia carry off the honors of the day. But to-night Winnie did not seem to see the forget-me-not eyes turned appealingly to her. She appeared to be completely absorbed in her Cicero. I endured Milly's frowns as long as I could, and finally pushed aside my own studies, and said, "Come into my bedroom where we will not disturb the other girls, and I will straighten it out for you."

Milly was delighted. She threw her arms around my neck and thrust some cream peppermints into my pocket.

We were in the midst of Cæsar's negotiations with Ariovistus, and had nearly finished the paragraph, when Milly suddenly looked up.

"Tib," she said, "do you know whatever became of Madame Celeste's last bill? I thought I put it in my bureau drawer, but I must have left it around somewhere. Have you seen it? I can't find it."

"Then you could not pay it this afternoon?" I asked evasively.

"Oh, yes! she made out another bill and receipted it for me, but I want to be sure that the first one is destroyed."

"I thought all your money was taken; where did you get enough to pay this bill?"

"Oh! that is a secret," she replied, with a pleased little flutter of importance. "It's no manner of consequence how I came by it. I've paid the bill—that's the essential thing—and I've got out of that dreadful quicksand. Oh, Tib, I have been so unhappy, and Cynthia has been so mean! I did not think it possible that any one could be so horrid."

"Tell me all about it, dear," I said, caressing the curly blond head which nestled on my knee.

"I believe I will. I feel like telling somebody, and Winnie is so queer lately—she freezes me. She has disapproved of me and scolded me ever since she found out about Cynthia's dress, and I can't bear to be disapproved of. It isn't one bit nice. Adelaide is perfectly splendid; she likes me and pets me, but perhaps she wouldn't if she knew everything; but you are just my dear old Tib. You would always like me, wouldn't you, even if I were real wicked?"

"Yes indeed, Milly," I replied; "and so would Winnie; you don't half realize her love for you."

"Then she has a very queer way of show-

ing it. She makes me feel as if I had committed some dreadful sin, and she was urging me to confess. She is just about as pleasant a companion as that Florentine monk—what's his name? who kept nagging Lorenzo de Medici—even when the poor man was just as busy as he could be a-dying."

"Savonarola acted as he thought was kindest and best for his poor guilty friend. Sometimes the surgeon who probes our wound is the truest friend— But you are going to tell me about your trouble—I've noticed how red your little nose has been of late."

"It was partly Celeste's fault, too," Milly said. "Cynthia's and Celeste's and mine. Of course the fault was mostly mine. You see it all started with the minuet—with which Professor Fafalata closed his dancing class just before the Christmas holidays. He wished us to be costumed in the Florentine style of the early part of the sixteenth century. I was talking it over with Celeste, and she said I ought to have the front of my petticoat covered with some jewelled net which she had just imported from Paris. It was very expensive, but very beautiful, and showy in the evening. The net was made of gold

thread set with imitation amethysts and rubies, an arabesque design, copied from some mediæval embroidery, and just the thing for me, since I was to represent a young princess of the house of Medici. I thought that I would write mother, who was in Florida then, and ask her to lend me one of her party dresses, and that it would be just the thing to put over it; and while I was admiring it and before I had really ordered it, or realized what she was doing, Celeste had cut me off a yard of it, and had charged it to my account—fifteen dollars. I brought it here, you remember, only to find that Madame had interested Professor Waite in the minuet, and that he had promised to lend the girls some beautiful costumes of the period which he had brought back from Paris. There was that lovely heliotrope velvet edged with ermine for Adelaide, and a faded pink brocade sprigged with primroses for me.

"So of course there wasn't the slightest need for my golden net. I carried it to Celeste to see if she would take it back. She said that she would like to oblige me, but as it was cut she couldn't quite do that, but she would try to dispose of it for me. And she did sell it a few days later for ten dollars. I thought that was better than to lose the entire

sum. She handed me the money, saying that it would put her to some trouble to change her accounts, and I had better let the bill go in just as she had made it out, and I could hand mother the ten dollars and explain matters. I really intended to do so, but I was nearly bankrupt that month. My pocket money just seemed to walk away. I had invited Adelaide to see the play of the 'Harvard Hasty Pudding,' and of course I had to have Miss Noakes chaperone us, and I hadn't money enough left to buy the tickets."

"Why didn't you tell her so?" I asked.

"Oh! I couldn't back out after I had asked her; and I owed her a little treat of some kind, for she invited me to see the cadet drill at her brother's school.

"Well, after I had broken the ten dollar bill to get the tickets, the first thing I knew it was all gone. I knew mother wouldn't mind, and that I could tell her any time after she came home, but it never seemed necessary to mention it in my letters and I never did."

"Oh, Milly!"

"Horrid of me, wasn't it? But I had worse temptations. My pocket money is so very skimpy compared with what the other girls

have, and with what I have, too, in the way of credit for certain things, that I am often really embarrassed and have to turn and twist and borrow and pinch to make it stretch out. When you girls clubbed together and paid for Polo's sisters at the Home, I wanted awfully to help, but I couldn't. You see father lets me subscribe so much annually to the Home and he sends in a check every year for me, and thinks that ought to be enough. But I don't feel as though I was giving it at all, for it does not even pass through my hands. I don't deny myself to give it, as Adelaide does for her charities, and I haven't a penny for any special case of distress or sudden emergency which I may happen to hear of.

"Do you know, Tib, that Satan actually suggested to me how easily I might have extra pocket money by ordering things from Celeste, and letting her sell them again in just the same way that she managed with the golden net? I knew that she would be glad enough to do it, for I found out afterward that Rosaria Ricos bought that net of Celeste and paid her full price for it! So you see she kept back five dollars on the second sale, besides making a good commission on the first."

"But you didn't do it, Milly dear; you surely did not obtain your charity money in any such dishonest way as that?"

"No, Tib. I didn't do it for charity. I some way felt that God would not accept such a gift from me; but there came a time when I had a worse temptation still. You know all last term papa used to ride with me every Saturday afternoon either at the riding academy or in the Park. Well, something is the matter with his liver; it hurts him to trot, and he has had to give it up, and Wiggins took me out. But I hate riding with a groom, and so one day when papa called I told him I didn't care for any more riding this winter. This happened the week you went home to help tend your mother when she was sick, and that is the reason you never heard of it. I was taking father up to the studio when I said it, to show him Professor Waite's Academy picture, and papa was so vexed with me about my not wanting to ride that he didn't half notice the pictures.

"He took to Professor Waite, though, right away; and just as he was leaving asked him if he rode. 'When I am so fortunate as to have the opportunity,' Professor Waite replied.

"'Very good,' said papa. 'Then possibly you will oblige me by accompanying my daughter and one of her friends on an occasional ride in the park.' He explained that he had a good saddle horse, which needed exercise, which he would be glad to have him use; and that, what was more important, I needed exercise too, and was so perverse that I did not want to take it alone. 'And now,' said he, 'the cruel parent proposes, Milly, to pay for another horse for one of your other girl friends. I suppose you will choose Adelaide, and if Professor Waite will act as your escort occasionally, I think you can manage to extract some pleasure from the exercise.'

"Of course I was perfectly delighted, and hugged papa, and called him a dear old thing. Professor Waite, who had looked awfully bored and had even begun to mumble something about being too busy, began to take an interest in the matter as soon as Adelaide's name was mentioned, and papa had an interview with Madame and got her permission to let us ride every Saturday morning. Adelaide was down at her tenement, and it was left that I was to tell her when she returned, and I thought everything was settled. But

when Adelaide came in she was looking troubled over some of her tenants' tribulations and she only half listened to me.

"'I would like above all things to ride again,' she said 'as I used to on the plains when I lived out West; but there is no use talking about it, Milly dear, I can't do it. I have no riding habit, and I cannot afford to have one made. Thank you just as much, but don't say another word about it.'

"You can imagine how disappointed I was. I knew very well that neither Madame nor mamma would let me ride alone with Professor Waite, even if papa would permit it; and I knew, too, that the Professor would lose every bit of interest in the plan if Adelaide did not go. I was not thoroughly selfish, Tib. I wanted Adelaide to have a good time too, and I wanted Professor Waite to be happy. I told myself that if he loved Adelaide, I would do all I could to help him, and perhaps some day he would remember that it was through me that he had won her, and like me a little for it, and never suspect that I—that I——"

Her voice broke and she buried her head on my shoulder. "Dear Milly," I said, caressing and soothing her as best I could.

"Of course you were not selfish. Well, and what happened next?"

"I couldn't give up the plan, Tib, and I thought that if all that kept Adelaide from joining in it was the lack of a habit, that could be easily arranged. I would make her a present of it. I was sure that father would give me twenty-five dollars for my next birthday present, and I thought it would do no harm to spend it in advance. So I asked Celeste how much cloth it would take, and I had it sent her from Arnold's, a beautiful fine dark-green broadcloth. And then I told Adelaide what I had done and that she must go around to Celeste's with me and be fitted. Do you believe it, she would not? She said that it would be wrong for her to accept such a present from me; and besides, nothing would induce her to ride with Professor Waite, for she couldn't endure him. That put an end to the ride in the Park. Cynthia would have taken Adelaide's place, but when I told Professor Waite that Adelaide would not go, he looked so angry that I saw he wanted to get out of the arrangement, and I suggested that perhaps we had better give up the plan. He said, very well, just as I pleased, and looked so relieved that I almost cried then and there.

Papa was so provoked when I told him of it that I did not dare say a word about the riding-habit, especially as he had just handed me my little Swiss watch as my birthday present. So I pretended to be pleased with it, and there was that dreadful cloth for the riding-habit on my hands, and I didn't know what to do. Mamma was still in Florida, and papa said that she was not very strong and must not be worried—I must only write cheerful letters to her. I didn't feel very cheerful, I assure you. Then Cynthia told me one day that she had twenty dollars with which she wanted to purchase a winter suit and she would like my advice about it. I was in debt just twenty dollars for the cloth for the habit, and I told her about it and begged her to take it off my hands. She went with me to Celeste's and liked it very much. The only trouble was that her mother had intended the twenty dollars to pay for both material and making, and of course she ought to get something not nearly so nice.

"She said at last that if I would get Celeste to wait for her pay she would take the dress and pay her later. I thought only of paying for the material at Arnold's, for I had expected to have the money by that time, and

had asked them to make a separate bill out, and not put it on my book that goes every month to papa. So we arranged it. Cynthia gave me her twenty dollars and I settled for the cloth, and Celeste made the dress for her, and furnished the trimmings. But how she did run them up! She had a band of real sable around the hem of the skirt and trimmed the jacket with it too; and made her that cute little toque with heads and tails on it, and when the bill came in it was sixty dollars. Cynthia was frightened. 'I never can pay it in the world,' she said. 'I think your dressmaker is frightfully extortionate; and I had no idea it would be so much.' I felt sorry for her and I felt, too, that I was to blame for getting her into the predicament; so I said we would divide the expense, and she should only pay half. But she grumbled at that, and said that I had inveigled her into the trouble, and that she had a dressmaker on 125th Street who would have made the suit for ten dollars. When I reminded her of the fur, she said she did not believe it was real sable, and she didn't want it any way.

"I offered to take it to Gunther's and see if I could get something for it, if she would rip it off, but she said she would do no such

thing; the dress would be a fright without it. It was all a miserable mess, and I was so unhappy. It would have been some consolation if Cynthia had been grateful, but she blamed me for everything, and I think that, considering all I have done for her, she treated me very shabbily when she said that Adelaide was the only lady in the Amen Corner, and she did not care to speak to any of us again."

"That was like Cynthia, and I am sure that the loss of her friendship can only be a benefit to you. But, Milly, you must bravely shoulder the greater part of the blame yourself. Your first wrong step was in getting the golden net without permission, then in letting Celeste pay you for it and yet having it charged to your father. Then, again, in getting the cloth for Adelaide's habit without consulting your father you deliberately did wrong; and in bargaining with Cynthia, instead of going straight to your father and confessing your fault, you waded still more deeply in——"

"I know it; but there you are scolding me just like Winnie, and it doesn't make the trouble a bit easier to bear to be told that I deserve it all, and am a miserable little sinner. You needn't imagine that I did not realize

what a wretch I was; only I didn't seem to see the way out. Everything I did to extricate myself got me deeper into the quicksand. I saved every way, all that I could; one month I laid by two dollars and thirty-seven cents, but the next I slipped back three and a quarter, and Cynthia handed me a five dollar bill one day, and told me that was every cent that she could pay, and I must let her off from the rest. And to crown it all, Winnie found out about it, and nearly drove me wild. Oh, Tib, I have been in such trouble, what with this dreadful bill that I didn't dare tell papa about, and Professor Waite, and all my lessons so hard, and my marks getting worse than ever, and Winnie turning on me. It just seemed as if I would die, and I almost wished I could. I thought seriously about killing myself only the night before last. I think if I could have found any poison that would not have hurt I would have taken it."

"Don't talk so, Milly; it is wicked. You would have done nothing of the sort."

"But I would. I went into the chemical laboratory and looked at the green and blue stuff in the test tubes, but I couldn't quite screw my courage up to do more than taste just a little bit of one kind that looked more

deadly than the rest. It was horrid, and took the skin off of the tip of my tongue. I ate a quarter of a pound of assorted mints before I could get the taste out of my mouth. If I could have found some laudanum, or something that would not have tasted so bad, or would have killed me by putting me to sleep, I would have taken it that night, for I was miserable enough to do anything, however unscrupulous and reckless. If I hadn't been so very desperate perhaps I would never have dared to do what I did do; the thing which really broke the meshes of the golden net which seemed to have me in its toils. I didn't mean to tell any one, but I was just driven to it, and I know you will keep my secret—besides I have told you so much that you might as well know all. Tib, I——"

"Milly, it is time we were all in bed." It was Winnie who spoke. She stood in the doorway, cold and commanding, and Milly cowered before her. She did not offer to kiss her, but shrank, frightened, away to her room.

"Oh, Winnie," I said, "why did you come in just then? Milly was just about to confess to me what she did to get the money with which she has just paid Celeste."

"You have no business to coax her secret from her," Winnie replied angrily. "Whatever it is, you have no right to know it unless she has wronged you. I am afraid our dear Milly is in deep waters. But whatever she may have done lies between her own conscience and God, and I believe that He will show her how to make restitution and keep, in the future, strictly to the right. Oh, my poor, precious Milly! I wish I could suffer all the consequences of your wrong doing for you, but I can't. Every sin brings suffering, and it is the suffering that purifies. I can't save you that experience, but I will shield you from open shame if I can. I forbid you, Tib, to pry into Milly's affairs any further, to question her, or allow her to confide in you, or even suspect her. Only pray for her, and love her; that is all you can do."

"It is you who suspect her," I exclaimed hotly, "and unjustly, Winnie. Milly has been extravagant and thoughtless; worse than that, she has been underhanded and deceitful in regard to expenditures, but she did not take the money from the cabinet; of that I am positive."

"Have I ever charged her with anything so dreadful?" Winnie asked. "Have I not

tried in every way to keep that suspicion from every one? Give me credit for that, at least."

"In words, Winnie; but in your secret thought you have wronged her. I know that you love her with a sort of a fierce, maternal love which makes you want her to be perfect, and which fears the worst and tortures yourself with imaginary impossibilities. I tell you that Milly has learned a very thorough lesson in regard to deception; she will never offend in that way again; and as to this affair of the cabinet, I would as soon suspect you as her."

"Suspect me, then," Winnie cried. "I wish you would. I hoped that Cynthia was going to lead suspicion my way, but it seems she can't do it. I have too good a reputation." And Winnie laughed cynically. "Well, the time may come when you may not think so well of me. Meantime, I thank you with all my heart for believing in Milly."

CHAPTER IX.

"POLO."

IT must not be inferred that our life that winter was all intense and tragical; if it had been so we could not have endured it. There were patches of clear sky, and the sunlight of generous acts glinted through the storm. We had all merry hearts and good digestions, and these bore us up under our troubles with the buoyancy which is so mercifully granted to youth and inexperience. Then, too, our thoughts were not entirely taken up with ourselves and our own affairs. For a few days after this we saw nothing of Mr. Mudge, and our attention was partly diverted to another matter.

One day, earlier in the school year, Mrs. Booth, of the Salvation Army, had addressed Madame's school on the need of work among the poor of New York. One little parable which she gave made a great impression upon us. I cannot repeat Mrs. Booth's eloquent language, but will give the main points of the story.

"As a young girl," said Mrs. Booth, "I was very selfish and hard-hearted. I did not care for the suffering and anguish of others. It was not that I was naturally cruel, but I did not think of them at all. I thought and cared only for myself, of parties and dresses, and of having a good time—and this Dead Sea of selfishness was numbing every generous impulse within me. My heart was growing to resemble a certain spring which my mother took me to see when a little child. I remember the walk through the wood beside a little brook which babbled over the stones, and how the light of the sky shone down into its clear amber waters, and the trees and the clouds were reflected in its quiet pools; how long mosses fringed its stones, and water plants made a little forest under its ripples; and how its depths were all alive with tiny fish and

happy living creatures seeking their food and sporting among the cresses. But we came presently to a spring quite apart and very different from the brook. The water was deep, and quiet, and clear, but when I looked into it I was struck by a death-like influence, weird and sinister. There were no minnows darting through the depths like silver needles, or craw-fish burrowing in the banks, or water beetles skimming the surface like oarsmen rowing their light wherries. There was no life to be seen anywhere. The very stones had a strange, unnatural look; they were white as marble; no mosses covered them, no water-lilies or algae grew through the deadly water. The very leaves which had fallen into the pool were white and heavy, as though carved in marble. The grasses which grew downward and dipped into the spring were marble grasses, more like clumsy branching coral than the delicate bending sprays above the waves. It was a petrifying spring, and everything dipped in its waters was presently coated with a fine, stony sediment and practically turned to stone.

"So the deadly, petrifying spring of selfish-

ness will turn the heart to stone, and while having the form of life it will be cold and hard and dead."

This was Mrs. Booth's little parable, and while none of our hearts had been dipped in this petrifying spring, it woke us to new desires to do more for the suffering poor.

Something happened a little after this talk, and several weeks previous to the robbery, which gave a direction to our impulses. Milly and I were returning from a shopping excursion one very cold and rainy Saturday, when we were approached by a poor girl who was selling pencils on a corner. "They are always useful," I said; "suppose we take some."

"I should perfectly love to," Milly replied, "but I havn't a cent."

The girl had noticed our hesitation and came to us. "Please buy some, young ladies," she said; "I haven't had a thing to eat today."

"Then come right along with me," said Milly. "Mother lets me lunch at Sherry's, whenever I am out shopping."

The girl followed us but stopped beneath the awning of the handsome entrance. "That's too fine a place for me, Miss," she said. "Only swells go there. It costs the

eyes out of your head just for a clean plate and napkin in there. How much do you s'pose now, a lunch would cost in that there palace?"

"Not more than a dollar," Milly replied cheerfully.

"Glory!" exclaimed the girl, "if you mean to lay out as much as that on me, why ten cents will get me all I want to eat at a bakery on Third Avenue, and I'll take the balance home to the children."

"That is just where the awkwardness of papa's way of doing comes in," Milly said to me. "You see," she explained to the girl, "I've spent all my money to-day, but I can have a lunch charged here."

Still the girl hesitated. "I'm not fit," she said, looking at her dripping, ragged clothes. We were sheltered from view by the awning, and in an instant Milly had taken off her handsome London-made mackintosh and had thrown it around the girl. "There, that covers you all up," she said, "and your hat isn't so very bad."

It was a tarpaulin, and, though a little frayed at the edges, its glazed surface had shed the rain and it was not conspicuously shabby.

We passed into the ladies' restaurant and

seated ourselves at one of the little tables. Milly took up a menu and looked it over critically. "Now I am going to order a very sensible, plain luncheon," she announced. "No frills, but something hot and nourishing. We will begin with soup. Papa would approve of that. He is always provoked when I cut the soup. Green turtle? Yes, waiter, three plates of green turtle soup."

"Please excuse me," I interrupted. "I do not care for anything."

"No? Well, two plates. I usually loathe turtle soup, but I'm determined to be sensible and have a solid lunch. Some way, I don't know why, I'm not very hungry this afternoon."

"Perhaps the ice-cream soda we had at Huyler's has taken away your appetite," I suggested.

The soup was brought and Milly sipped a little daintily, as she afterward said merely to keep her guest company. The guest devoured it ravenously; she had evidently never tasted anything so delicious; but perhaps plain beef-stew would have seemed as good, for her feast was seasoned with that most appetizing of sauces—hunger.

"What will you have next?" Milly asked politely, as the waiter removed their plates.

"Whatever you take, Miss," the girl replied. "I ain't particular. I guess anything here's good enough for me."

"I declare I don't feel as if I could worry down another morsel," Milly answered. "There is nothing so surfeiting as green turtle. It makes me almost sick to think of crabs or birds, or even shrimp salad. Let's skip all that, and take the desert. Waiter, bring us two ices. Which flavor do you prefer?" she asked of the pencil vender, and again the bewildered girl left the choice to her hostess.

"Strawberry, mousse, and chocolate are too cloying," Milly remarked meditatively. "Bring us lemon water ice and pistache. Don't you just dote on pistache?"

"I never ate any, Miss."

"Then I shall have the pleasure of introducing you to something new. You'll be sure to like it."

The girl did like it. She ate every morsel. Possibly something more solid would have proved as satisfying, but Milly was pleased with her evident appreciation.

"Why don't you eat the macaroons? Don't you like them? Would you rather have kisses?"

"If you please Miss, might I take them home to the children?"

"Yes, I suppose so. It isn't exactly good form to put things in your pocket, but they will be charged for just the same, even if we leave them, so take them, quick, now that the waiter is not looking."

Although the waiter was not watching us, some one else was. A faultlessly dressed gentleman approached at this juncture and greeted Milly in an impressive manner.

"Why, Mr. Van Silver!" she exclaimed, a little fluttered by the unexpected meeting. "I haven't seen you since last summer at Narragansett Pier."

"And whose fault is that?" Mr. Van Silver asked plaintively. "If young ladies will shut themselves up in convents, and never send their adoring friends any invitation to a four o'clock tea or a reception or even a school examination or a prayer meeting, where they might catch a glimpse of them, it is the poor adorer's misfortune, and not his fault, if he is forgotten. Won't you introduce me to your friends?"

"Certainly. Tib, this is Mr. Van Silver. Mr. Van Silver, allow me to present you to

Tib—I mean to Miss Smith. I can't introduce you to the other young lady, because I don't know her name."

We had all risen and the last remark was made *sotto voce.* As we left the building Mr. Van Silver sheltered Milly with his umbrella and the waif followed with me. "Come with us to Madame's," I had said, "and perhaps we can do something for you."

As we walked on together Milly and Mr. Van Silver carried on a lively conversation, part of which I overheard, and the remainder Milly reported afterward. She first told him of how we had met our new acquaintance, and he seemed much interested.

"And so you have just given her a very solid and sensible lunch, consisting of green turtle soup and ice cream." He laughed a low, gurgling laugh and appeared infinitely amused.

"And macaroons," Milly added; "she has at least five macaroons in her pocket for the children."

"Oh! yes, a macaroon a piece for the children. I wonder if I couldn't contribute a cigarette for each of them," and he gurgled again in a purring, pleasant way.

"You are making fun of me," Milly pouted, in an aggrieved way.

"Not at all. I think it was just like you, Miss Milly, to do such a lovely thing. You are one of the most kind-hearted girls I know,—to beggars, I mean,—but the young men tell a different story. There's poor Stacey Fitz Simmons. I saw him the other day and he was complaining bitterly of your hard-heartedness. He said you hardly spoke to him at Professor Fafalata's costume dance."

"How unfair! he was my partner in the minuet. What more could he ask?"

"There's nothing mean about Stacey. He propably wanted you to dance all the other dances with him. I told him that he was a lucky young dog to be invited at all. Why did you leave me out?"

"I didn't think that a grown-up gentleman, in society, would care for a little dance at a boarding-school, where he would only meet bread-and-butter school girls."

"Oh! I'm too old, am I? Well, I must say you are complimentary. And it's a fault that doesn't decrease as time passes. Well, I shall tell Stacey that there's hope for him. You only care for very young men. Why did you send back the tickets which he sent you for the Inter-scholastic Games! You nearly broke his heart. He has been training for the past

six months simply and solely in the hope that you will see him win the mile run."

"But I will see him. I wrote him that Adelaide's brother, Jim, had already sent her tickets, which we should use, and as he might like to bestow his elsewhere, I returned them."

"'Bestow them elsewhere?' Not he. Stacey is constant as the pole. He's as loyal as he is thoroughbred. He was telling me about the serenade that the cadet band gave your school last year. Some girl let down a scrap basket from her window full of buttonhole bouquets. He wore one pinned to the breast of his uniform for a week because he thought you had a hand in it; and you never saw a fellow so cut up as he was when he heard last summer that you had nothing to do with it, and even slept sweetly through the entire serenade."

"Stacey is too silly for anything. It is perfectly ridiculous for a little boy like him to talk that way."

"Little boy—let me see, just how old is Stacey, anyway! About seventeen. Six months your senior, is he not? At what age should you say that one might fall quite seriously and sensibly in love?"

"Oh! not till one is twenty at least," Milly

answered quickly; but she blushed furiously while she spoke.

"Sensible girl! But to return to the subject of the Inter-scholastic Games. I am glad that you and your friend Miss Adelaide are going. They are to take place out at the Berkeley Oval, you know. I have no doubt that the roads will be settled and we shall have fine weather by that time. May I have the pleasure of driving you out on my coach?"

"Certainly. That is, I must coax papa to write a note to Madame, asking her to let us go."

"I will call at the bank and see your papa about it to-morrow, and meantime do beam upon poor Stacey. And, by the way, here is something which you may as well add to the macaroons for those poor children," and he pressed a dollar bill into Milly's hand. Some one passed us rapidly at that instant and gave the young man so questioning a glance that he raised his hat, asking Milly a moment later if she knew the lady.

"Why, that is Miss Noakes!" Milly exclaimed, in dismay. "You must not go a step further with us, Mr. Van Silver, or we will be reported for 'conduct.'"

"Far be it from me to gratify the evidently

malicious desire of that estimable person to report you young ladies. Good-by until the games," and with another bow he was gone.

As we approached the school building we saw Professor Waite leaving by the turret door, and I asked him to allow us to enter by it, at the same time requesting him to buy some of our new friend's pencils. He looked at the girl closely, and as Milly led the way with her I explained how we had found her.

"She is a picturesque creature," Professor Waite remarked. "I could make her useful as a model. The girls pose so badly and dislike to do it so much, it might be well to try this waif. Tell her to come on Monday, and if the class like her well enough to club together and pay a small amount for her services, we will engage her to sit for us."

He scribbled a line on one of his visiting cards for her to show Cerberus, as we called our dignified janitor, who was very particular about whom he admitted to the building; and I hastily followed our *protégé* to the Amen Corner, where I found Adelaide talking with her while Milly ransacked her wardrobe for cast-off clothing, finding only a Tam O'Shanter, a parasol, and some soiled gloves.

"Can't you find her a pair of rubbers?" Adelaide asked. "The girl's feet are soaked."

"Do you keep your own rubbers?" the waif asked. "That was my father's business."

"What do you mean?" inquired Adelaide.

"My father was a rubber—a massage man for the Earl of Cairngorm."

"Oh!" said Adelaide, a light beginning to dawn upon her mind. "I meant rubber overshoes, not a bath woman."

"We call those galoshes," said the girl, as Milly produced a pair which were not mates. "I'm sure you've given me a fine setting out, young ladies. I'll do as much for you if I ever has the chance. Who knowses? Maybe some day I'll be a swell and you poor. Then you just call on me, and don't you forget it." With which cheerful suggestion she left us, grateful and happy. I took her down to the main entrance, and, showing the card to Cerberus, explained that she had been engaged by Professor Waite, and was to be allowed to enter every morning. He granted a grudging consent, not at all approving of her appearance without the waterproof, and I flew back to the Amen Corner to join in the general conference. She had told Adelaide that her name was Pauline Terwilliger. Her

father had been English, her mother Swiss. They had knocked about the world as footballs of fortune, but had lived longest in London, where her father had died. Her brother had come to New York some years previous, and her mother had brought the family over on his insistence. But this brother had failed to meet them, as he had promised to do, on their landing at Castle Garden. Their mother had lost his address, and they were stranded in a strange city. They had advertised in the papers, and had left their own address at the Barge Office, but her brother had never appeared. They had taken a room in a tenement house, and the mother had obtained some work, scrubbing offices and cleaning windows. But she had taken cold and was now in a hospital, and Polo was trying to support the two younger children.

"They are living in one of the worst tenement houses in Mulberry Bend," said Adelaide. "I would like to give them a room in my house, but it is full; and cheap as the rent is, they could never pay it."

"The younger children ought to go to the Home," I suggested.

"The Home is full," Winnie replied. "I called there to-day. Emma Jane says it just

breaks her heart to look at the list of applications waiting for a vacancy. Our dear Princess[1] has in mind a little old-fashioned house which fronts on a side street, whose yard backs against ours. She would like to have it rented as an annex. She says the Home ought to have a nursery for very little babies. You know it does not now take children under two years of age, on account of the expense of nurses; but this would be such a charming place for them, and we could call it the 'Manger,' and have it connected with the main building with a long glass piazza. The scheme is a perfect one. All it needs is money to carry it out. Unfortunately, that is lacking. I have corresponded with all our out-of-town circles of King's Daughters. They are doing all they can, and have pledged enough, with our other subscriptions, to carry the Home through the coming year on its old basis; but there isn't a cent to spare for a 'manger.'"

"Would all of the new house be taken up by the nursery?" Adelaide asked.

"No; the Princess proposed that the upper

[1] "The Princess" was a quaint little foreigner, who gave the girls botany lessons, and who originated the idea of the Home, whose founding is related in the initial volume of this series.

story, which consists of four little bedrooms, should be used as 'guest chambers' for emergency cases, convalescent children returned from hospitals, and children who, on account of peculiar distress,—like Polo's sisters,—it seemed best to receive for a short time entirely free. The Princess thought that we might like to club together and pay for one such room, and then we could designate at any time the persons we would like to have occupy it. There is always a list of applicants, which would be submitted to us to choose from, in case we had no candidates of our own to suggest. The occupants of such a room would then be as truly our guests as if we entertained them in our own home. It would come in very nicely now in Polo's case."

Milly gave a deep sigh. "I wish I could help you, girls, but you know just how I am situated."

Adelaide knitted her brows. "We must get up some sort of an entertainment. It makes me tired to think of it, but there's no other way."

"And in the mean time, Emma Jane must find room for those children some way," said Winnie. "I will call a meeting of the Hor-

nets in our corner to-night, and we will pledge ourselves to raise money enough for one guest chamber for these children, and until it is arranged for, Emma Jane must make up beds for them on the school desks, or we can buy a *retroussé* bedstead for the parlor."

"*Retroussé* bedstead! What's that?" Milly asked, in a puzzled way.

"Don't be dense, Milly; it's vulgar to speak of a turn-up nose, you know; and I don't know why we should insult a parlor organ bedstead in the same way. If we can't afford that sort of thing, they might turn the dining tables upside down; they would make better cribs than the children have now, I'll venture to say."

"You will tuck them up, I suppose, with napkins and table-cloths," Cynthia sneered. But Winnie paid no attention to the interruption.

"They will not mind a little crowding, and the thing will march right along if we only plunge into it. They must not stay another night in that old tenement. Polo said there was a rag-picker under them, and a woman who had delirium tremens in the next room. I am going down to-morrow afternoon to take them to the Home."

A meeting of our own particular circle of King's Daughters, which was made up of ourselves and the "Hornets," took place that evening in the Hornets' Nest. The Hornets were a coterie of mischievous girls rooming in a little family like the Amen Corner, but in the attic story under the very eaves. They took up the idea of the guest chamber with great enthusiasm, but they were nearly as impecunious as ourselves. Suddenly Little Breeze—our pet name for Tina Gale—exclaimed, "I have a notion! We will invite the school to a 'Catacomb Party, and the underground Feast of the Ghouls.'"

"How very scareful that sounds!" said Trude Middleton. "What is it, anyway?"

"Oh! it's a mystery, a blood-curdling mystery. It will cost everybody fifty cents, but it will be worth it. I want Witch Winnie to be on the committee of arrangements with me, and you must all give us full authority to do just as we please; and it is to be a surprise, and you must ask no questions."

"We trust you. Where's it to be? In the sewers, or the cathedral crypts?"

But Little Breeze refused to waft the least zephyr of information our way, and there was nothing for it but to wait.

As we were returning rather noisily from the Hornets' Nest, we passed Miss Noakes's open door, and she rang her little bell in a peremptory manner. This meant that we were to report ourselves immediately to her, and we did so.

"Young ladies," said Miss Noakes in her most disagreeable manner, "before reporting you to Madame, I would like to give you an opportunity of explaining a very irregular performance. As I was returning from a meeting of the Young Women's Christian Association this afternoon, I saw three occupants of your corner taking a promenade with a gentleman. This is, as you know, an infringement of school rules, and I would like to inquire whether the young man has any authorization from your parents for such attention."

"Only two of us were concerned in this matter," I replied. "We met Mr. Van Silver quite by chance, and he very politely offered Milly the protection of his umbrella for a part of the way home, as she had none. He is an old friend of her family and thoroughly approved of by Mr. Roseveldt."

"How often have I told you young ladies never to go out, on the pleasantest day, with-

out an umbrella or waterproof, since a storm may come up at any minute?"

"I did take my waterproof," Milly replied.

"Then you had no occasion to accept the gentleman's umbrella," Miss Noakes said sternly.

"But I gave it to Polo," Milly stammered, quite fluttered.

"Polo! Who is Polo? and how can you tell me, Miss Smith, that Miss Roseveldt and you were the only ones implicated in this disgraceful affair, when I saw three of you enter the turret door?"

"The third girl was Polo, the new model whom Professor Waite has engaged to pose for the portrait class."

"A professional model? Worse and worse! and how comes it that you were walking with such a questionable character?"

I related the entire story as simply as possible; but it was evident that Miss Noakes did not approve.

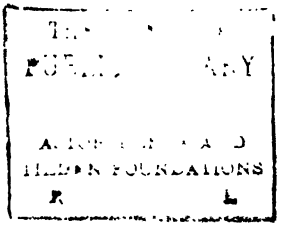
"A most extraordinary performance," she commented. "I feel it my duty to report it to Madame."

"You may spare yourself that trouble, Miss Noakes," Adelaide replied. "Tib, Winnie, and I are going to tell Madame all about it

at her next office hour. We want to ask her permission to get up a little entertainment in behalf of Polo's little brother and sisters."

"And I shall suggest to Madame," Miss Noakes added, "the advisability of inquiring into the character and antecedents of this girl, before she allows her to become an accredited dependent of her establishment, or authorizes the bestowal of charity upon her family. Artists' models are often disreputable people with whom your parents would not be willing that you should associate, and I advise you not to become too intimate with a perfect stranger."

We had come through the ordeal on the whole quite triumphantly, but Polo had excited Miss Noakes's enmity. She could never be won to regard her as anything but a vagabond, and always spoke of her as 'that model girl' in a tone that belied the literal signification of the words; and later, when by dint of spying and listening Miss Noakes learned that a robbery had been commited in the Amen Corner, her dislike and suspicion of poor Polo led to very painful consequences. The relation of which, however, belongs to a later chapter.



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CHAPTER X.

THE CATACOMB PARTY.

POLO came on Monday and posed to the satisfaction of Professor Waite and of the class. Winnie was successful in entering the two children at the Home, and Adelaide had a happy thought for Polo herself, who was too old to be received there. One of the smallest apartments in her tenement had been taken by Miss Billings and Miss Cohens, two seamstresses, honest, industrious old maids, who had lived and worked together since they were girls. Adelaide called them the two turtle doves, the odd combination of their name suggesting the nickname, and their fondness for each other bearing it out.

They were a cheerful pair, and their rooms were bright with flowers and canaries. One morning Miss Billings woke to find her friend dead at her side, having passed from life in sleep so peacefully that she neither woke nor disturbed the faithful friend close beside her.

The poor old lady was very lonely and was glad to take Polo in. The young girl brightened her life, and her own influence on the nearly friendless waif was excellent. In the intervals of posing Miss Billings taught Polo how to cut and fit dresses. Polo helped her with her sewing, and Miss Billings promised to take her into partnership by and by. Polo was very happy and grateful, and the girls all liked her immensely. She was a character in her way, an irresistible mimic. She would take off Miss Noakes to the life, while she had a talent which I have never seen equalled for making the most ludicrous and horrible faces. She was almost pretty, and with Miss Billings's help, made over the odds and ends of clothing bestowed upon her very nicely. Her one trinket was a string of coral beads and a little cross which her brother had sent her before she left England. She never gave up her faith in this brother. "Albert Ed-

ward 'll turn up some day rich," she said. She flouted the idea that he might be dead. "He ain't the dying kind," she said, when Cynthia suggested the possibility. "None of our family ain't, except father. Why, I've been through enough to kill a cat, and I haven't died yet."

She was especially devoted to Milly, to whom she felt, with reason, that she owed all her good fortune. Professor Waite found her remarkably serviceable as a model, from her versatility and ability to adapt herself to any character, giving a great variety of types for us to copy. When she wore the Italian costume, one would have thought her an Italian, and a complete change came over her when she donned the German cap and wooden shoes. "May be that's because I've lived amongst all sorts of foreigners so much," she said, "and Albert Edward always said I'd make an actress equal to the best. He said I had talent. I do pity them as hasn't. I wouldn't be one of the common herd for anything."

Polo was certainly uncommon. Her use of the English language had an individuality of its own. She hated Miss Noakes and said she had no business to be "tryannic" (mean-

ing tyrannical). She spoke of native Americans as abor-jines (a distortion of aborigines), and intermingled these little variations of her own with cockney phrases which were new to our untravelled ears.

She found difficulty in understanding our words and expressions, and once when Professor Waite told her to set up a screen she astonished us all by uttering a most blood-curdling yell, under the impression that he had commanded her to set up a *scream.*

She disliked Cerberus, and to save her from his scornful scrutiny and contemptuous remarks, Professor Waite had a duplicate key made to the turret door, by which Polo entered each morning and mounted directly to the studio.

She was very diverting, but much as we liked her we could not forget that we had assumed a grave responsibility in taking the support of her little sisters upon our hands, and we now began to actively agitate the plans for the Catacomb Party, which was to raise funds for the Annex with its "Manger and Guest Chambers."

One event of interest to us occurred before the evening of the Catacomb Party. This

was the Annual Drill of the Cadet School. All of the Amen Corner and the Hornets had invitations. We occupied front seats in the east balcony of the great armory, vigilantly chaperoned by Miss Noakes. Her best intentions could not prevent the young cadets from paying their respects to us during the intervals of the drill.

The young men looked handsomely in their gala uniforms of white trousers and gloves, blue coats, and caps set off with plenty of frogging and brass buttons. They performed their evolutions with a precision which would have done credit to a regiment of regulars—and received the praise of General Howard, who reviewed them.

Out of all the battalion there were two boys in whom we were chiefly interested: Adelaide's younger brother Jim, color sergeant of the baby company, and Milly's friend Stacey Fitz Simmons, the handsome drum-major.

Winnie insisted that Malcolm Douglas must have been thinking of the practising of this cadet drum corps when he wrote:

> And all of the people for blocks around,
> Boom-tidera-da-boom!
> Kept time at their tasks to the martial sound,
> Boom-tidera-da-boom!

While children to windows and stoops would fly,
Expecting to see a procession pass by,
And they couldn't make out why it never drew nigh,
With its boom-tidera-da—boom-a-diddle-dee;
Boom-tidera-da-boom!

It would seem such vigor must soon abate;
Boom-tidera-da-boom!
But they still keep at it, early and late;
Boom-tidera-da-boom!
So if it should be that a war breaks out,
They'll all be ready, I have no doubt,
To help in putting the foe to rout,
With their boom-tidera-da-boom—
Boom-tidera-da-boom—
Boom-tidera-da—boom-a-diddle-dee,
Boom-Boom-*Boom!*"

Stacey was seventeen, tall for his age, with a little feathery mustache outlining his finely cut upper lip. He was elegant in appearance and manners, and we all admired and liked him with the exception of perverse, wilful Milly. Jim was thirteen and small for his years. The life of privation which he had led during a period when he had been lost, the account of which has been given in the previous volume, had stunted his growth, and given him an appearance of delicacy. But Jim was wiry, and possessed great endurance, and his drilling that evening was noticeable for its accuracy and spirit. Adelaide and Jim were deeply attached to one another. They wrote each other long

letters every week, remarkable for their perfect confidence. As Jim's letters give an insight not only into his life at the cadet school, but also into the relations which subsisted between several of the cadets and members of our own school, as well as into a *contretemps* which introduced great consternation into the Catacomb Party, I will choose two from Adelaide's packet and insert them before describing the mystic entertainment of the Council of Ten.

LETTER NO. 1.

DEAR SISTER:

I like the barracks better than I did. I almost have gotten over being homesick, and the fellows are awfully nice now that I have come to know them. I miss mother, but I would rather die than let any one know it. I've put her photograph down at the bottom of my trunk, for it gave me the snuffles to see it, and Stacey Fitz Simmons caught me kissing it once, and I was so ashamed. He is one of the nicest fellows here, and he didn't rough me a bit about it, only whistled, and said: "You've got a mighty pretty mother; I guess she takes after your sister. Pity there wasn't more beauty left for the rest of the family." He knows you, and I guess you must remember meeting him when you visited the Roseveldts last summer at Narragansett Pier. He asked if you and Milly Roseveldt were at the same school, and would I please send his regards when I wrote. He is one of the Senior A boys, and is going to college next year. I am only Middle C, but he is ever so good to me, I am sure I don't know why. We are drilling, drilling all the time now for the annual drill at the Seventh Regiment Armory.

Stacey is an awfully good fellow. He's the head of everything. He's drum-major, and you just ought to see him in his uniform leading the drum corps [Jim spelled it *core*]. He's the cockatoo

of the school. Stacey's folks are rich, and his mother wrote the military tailor not to spare expense, but to get Stacey up just as fine as they make 'em, and I don't believe there's a drum-major of any of the crack regiments that can hold a candle to him for style. In the first place he has a high furry hat that looks like the big muffs they carried at the old folks' concerts. Then he has a bright scarlet coat all frogged and padded and laced with lots of gold cord, and the nattiest trousers and patent leather boots. But his baton—oh, Adelaide! words cannot express. I don't believe old Ahasuerus ever had a sceptre half as gorgeous, with a great gold ball on the top, and it will do your eyes good to see him swing it. Doesn't he put on airs, though! Put on isn't the word, for Stacey is airy naturally, and dignified, too. Buttertub says he walks as if he owned the earth. When he marches backward holding his baton crosswise, I'm always afraid that he will fall and that somebody might laugh, and that would kill him. But he never does fall. He seems to see with the buttons on the small of his back, and he stepped over a banana skin while marching to the armory just as dandified as you please. And he never fails to catch his baton when he tosses it into the air, and makes it whirl around twice before it comes down. He never bows to any of the fellows or seems to see them—except me. They are going to have Gilmore's Band at the drill, and Stacey was practising leading them around the armory. I was in the lower balcony, hanging over and watching him. He was going through his fanciest evolutions when he passed me. He looked straight ahead and never winked an eye. I didn't think he saw me till I heard him say, "How's that, dear boy?" and I clapped so hard that I nearly fell over.

Buttertub hates Stacey; he wanted to be drum-major himself.

He calls Stacey wasp-waist, but it only calls attention to his own big stomach. He is always eating, and he won't train, and he can't run without having a fit of apoplexy. He weighs too much for the crew and he can't even ride a bicycle, or do anything except the heavy work on the foot ball team and study. Yes, he can study; that's the disgusting part.

Stacy can do everything. He's a splendid sprinter. There's only one other boy in the school that can equal him, and that's a red-headed boy they call Woodpecker. He has longer legs than Stacey and of course takes a longer stride, and that counts. But Stacey is livelier and puts in four strides to three of the Woodpecker's, so they are pretty nearly equal. Stacey is a prettier runner, too. He does it just as *easy*, while the Woodpecker works all over, arms *and* legs, and bites on his handkerchief, and his eyes pop out, and when its all over he falls in a heap and looks as if he were dying, while Stacey takes another lap in better time than the last, just for fun.

Stacey rides the bicycle, too, splendidly. He has one of those big wheels and he can manage it with his feet and do all sorts of tricks with his hands. He has been giving me points on bicycle riding. He picked out my safety for me, and has been coaching me how to manage it. He says I am the best rider for a little chap that he ever saw, and that he means to make me win the race at the inter-scholastic. I tell you Stacey is a trump. He's an all-around athlete. He dances, and he rides, and he shoots in the summer when he goes hunting with his uncle; and he fences, and he's stroke on the crew, and he's our best high jump and there isn't anything that he can't do, except his lessons—sometimes—but they don't count. He says that if it wasn't for the beastly lessons school would be heavenly, and we all agree with him. Ricos said that he would head a petition to have lessons abolished and the boys would all sign it, but Stacey said that parents were so unprogressive he didn't believe they would, and he was afraid the head master wouldn't pay much attention to such a petition unless it bore the parents' signatures.

I've written an awfully long letter, but I like to write to you, and it was rainy to-day, and we couldn't go to the grounds, and I've hurt my ankle by falling from my bicycle so that I could not practise in the gymnasium. Now don't go and get scared, like a girl, and disapprove of athletics for such a little thing as that. It was only a little sprain, that will all be well before the drill, and I only barked my shin the least bit, nothing at all to what the Woodpecker does most every day.

I hope I shall be big enough to go on the foot-ball team next year. I know you think it's dangerous, but I've calculated the chances of getting hurt and they are so very slight that I guess I'll risk it. Why, out of the whole eleven last year there were only nine that got hurt.

Be sure you all come to the exhibition drill. I enclose two tickets and Stacy sends two more. He wants it distinctly understood that you and Miss Roseveldt are his guests. So you can give mine with my compliments to Miss T. Smith and Miss Winnie De Witt. I don't send any for that Vaughn girl, for Buttertub knows her and told me he was going to invite her.

No more at present,

From your affectionate brother,

JAMES HALSEY ARMSTRONG.

P. S. Stacey sends his regards to Miss Roseveldt.

P. S. No. 2. And to you.

LETTER NO. 2.

THE BARRACKS, April.

DEAR SISTER :

Wasn't the drill splendid? I knew you would enjoy it. How I wish father and mother had been in New York so they could have seen it.

You looked just stunning in that stylish hat. Stacey said so. You must excuse him if he didn't pay you very much attention. He could only leave the band during the intermission and of course he had to be polite to Miss Roseveldt. Besides he said I stuck so close to you that he hadn't any chance. He says he never saw a fellow so spooney over his own sister as I am. I tell him there aren't many chaps who have such a nice sister as you are, and then we were separated so long that I am making up for lost time.

I am glad you liked the French Army Bicycle drill. That was something quite new. Stacey was detailed to command it because he's a splendid cyclist himself, and he knew how to put us through. I didn't know till the day before that he was

going to call me out to skirmish. He said: "Jimmy, you can manage your wheel better than any one else except the Woodpecker, and I am going to have you two go through with a little fancy business that will bring the house down." And didn't it? When I fired off my gun going at full speed, they clapped so that I nearly lost my head. Ricos was mad because he wasn't selected for the special manœuvres. Ricos is better for speed than I am, and he's awfully quick-tempered—he's a Spaniard, you know, and he said to me, "Never mind, youngster, I'll pay you up for this at the inter-scholastic races." I suppose he means to win the gold medal, and I told Stacey that I believed he would, and I should be thankful to be second, or even third, for there are the best cyclists from all the other schools in the city to contend against. But Stacey says, "He can't do it, you know," meaning Ricos; and our trainer says that if he enters me at all he enters me to win. So I am going to try my level best.

Wasn't Cynthia Vaughn stunning in that green dress trimmed with fur! Buttertub said she was the most stylish girl at the drill. Stacey made him mad by saying that she was hardly that, though, as a Harvard chap once said of some one else, he had no doubt that she was a well-meaning girl and a comfort to her mother!

Ricos invited all the Hornets, and some one of them told him that you girls are going to have a great lark—a Catacombing Party. He thought it was to represent the games of the Roman arena with cats instead of lions and tigers. I told him it must be a mistake, and that if he supposed Madame's young ladies, and my sister especially, would do anything so low as to look on at a cat-fight, he didn't know what he was talking about. But Stacey said that there was something up, he knew, for when he asked Milly Roseveldt if the girls were going to have a Venetian Fête for the benefit of the Home, as they did last year, she said it was a sheet and pillow-case party this time, and boys were not admitted. He told her he would surely disguise himself in a sheet and pillow-case and come; but he only said so to tease her, and when he saw how distressed

she was he told her he was only fooling. Buttertub said Cynthia mentioned it too, and Stacey's idea was a good one and he believed he should try it. But Stacey said he would like to see him do it and that he would have him court-martialled for ungentlemanly conduct, and reduced to the ranks if he attempted to play the spy at one of the girl's frolics.

Stacey wanted me to be sure to tell you to tell Milly Roseveldt not to worry about what he said, for the cadets are all gentlemen and wouldn't think of going anywhere where they were not invited. That's so as far as Stacey is concerned, but I don't know about Ricos.

Do tell me what you are going to do, anyway—and for pity's sake don't have any cats in it.

Your affectionate brother,

J. H. ARMSTRONG.

Jim's misunderstanding of the Catacomb Party amused us very much. No one was alarmed by the boys' threats to attend it but Milly, who insisted that she had no confidence in Stacey and believed him fully capable of committing even this atrocious act.

As soon as the drill was over our interest centred on this party. The committee from our circle of King's Daughters waited upon Madame, and obtained her permission for the projected entertainment. She stipulated, however, that it must be strictly confined to members of the school and no outsiders admitted.

"The Literary Society," she said, "will give its public entertainment in the spring, and we do not wish to have the reputation of spending

our entire time in getting up charity bazaars, and imposing on our friends to buy tickets. Anything in reason which you care to do among yourselves, I will consent to. It does young girls good to have an occasional frolic."

Emboldened by the unusually happy frame of mind in which Madame seemed to be basking, Winnie asked if we might act a play and have "gentlemen characters" in it. Formerly the assumption of masculine attire had been prohibited, and at one of our Literary Society dramas, a half curtain had been stretched across the stage, giving a view of only the upper portion of the persons of the actors. The young ladies taking the part of the male personages in the play, wore cutaway coats outside their dresses, and riding hats or Tam O'Shanter caps.

Madame laughed as she recalled that absurd spectacle. "Since your audience is strictly limited to your associates, I think I may suspend that rule for this occasion," she said leniently. "When do you intend to give the play? I cannot allow you to use the chapel. How would the studio do?"

"If you please," said Winnie, "we would like the laundry."

"The laundry!" Madame exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, Madame. Tina Gale explored the lower regions under the school building one day, and the furnace room, and the long dim galleries connecting the coal bins, the cellars, and the laundry seemed to her so mysterious and pokerish that she thought it would be a nice idea to call it a Catacomb Party, especially as the girls have been so much interested in Professor Todd's early history of the Christian Church."

Madame's eyes twinkled as she heard this, for Professor Todd had been generally voted a prosy old nuisance; but Winnie was earnestness itself.

"Very well," said Madame kindly. "I do not want the girls to think that I am a cruel tyrant, or unduly strict or suspicious. ["She was thinking of the way in which she arraigned Adelaide for corresponding with Professor Waite," Winnie commented afterward.] If your committee will submit the programme to me, I have no doubt I shall be able to approve of everything. Let me see—the laundry will be your circus maximus, or theatre. Where will you have your refreshments?"

We had not thought of that.

"I will give you the key to the preserve closet; it is at the end of the drying-room, and

you may make a raid upon it for your provisions. Only please be careful not to waste or destroy any more than you can dispose of. I will have some tables placed in the drying-room, and you may partake of your collation there."

This was all we needed. The preparations for the Catacomb Party went merrily on.

Trude Middleton dramatized Cardinal Wiseman's novel, "Fabiola." We who had remained at school during the Christmas Holidays had read it aloud together, and its thrilling pictures of the persecutions of the martyrs, the games of the arena, and all the life of imperial Rome, had made a deep impression upon us. Trude Middleton had a genius for writing, and Little Breeze distributed the parts, rehearsed the play, took the rôle of the sorceress *Afra*, and acted as stage manager. The classical costumes were easily arranged. Professor Waite showed us how to drape crinkled cheese cloth and to manage the folds of peplum and toga, to trace a key-pattern border, to fillet our hair, and lace our sandals. The rehearsals were carried on in the most secret manner. Only the actors knew exactly what the play was to be. Expectancy was on the *qui vive*. Winnie had

written some mysteriously attractive admission tickets, and had ornamented each one with a tiny white wire skeleton. These tickets the ten sold to the other members of the school to the number of one hundred and twenty, not a single member of the school declining to patronize us.

The sale of these tickets had been materially aided by a manifesto, printed in red ink, supposed to simulate blood, and left dangling conspicuously from the wrist of old "Bonaparte" (Bonypart), the anatomy class skeleton.

This manifesto read as follows:

The Council of Ten, in secret session assembled, hereby summon you, each and all, severally and individually, to the Torture Chambers of the Inquisition (otherwise known as the studio), on the ringing of the great tocsin (sometimes called the eight o'clock study bell). At that hour let each be prepared to render up her earthly goods to the amount of one ticket, vouching for fifty cents; and having donned a winding sheet, and likewise a winding pillow-case as headgear, submit to the office of the Inquisition, which will transform her, with that happy despatch due to long experience, into a disembodied spirit. At the same time the Arch Witch Winnie will turn back the clock of Time to the first century, and each ghost, being first securely blindfolded, will be led by a spirit guide, experienced in the charge of personally conducting spirits, into the great amphitheatre of the Coliseum, where she will mingle with the most renowned personages of ancient Rome, and will be permitted to live a short and exciting life under the cheerful persecution of the amiable and playful Cæsars.

After the final scene of the gladiatorial combat in the arena each spirit will be led by her guide through the grewsome and labyrinthine Catacombs—faint not! fear not! to the

Feast of the Ghouls!

Thence, conducted by Orpheus with his lute, and Beatrice, the guide of Dante, they will cross the Styx and join in the

Dance of the Dead

in the shadowy Purgatorio.

At the stroke of midnight each spirit who has passed through this ordeal with a steadfast mind will be wafted to upper regions to the rest of the blessed.

Signed by the Council of Ten, as represented by Witch Winnie, of the Amen Corner, and Little Breeze, of the Hornets; and sealed with the great seal of our office, this ——— day of ——— 18—.

SEAL.

These preparations were going on simultaneously with the investigation of the robbery, and served in a measure to relieve the tension to which we were all subjected. Still the trouble was there, and we never quite forgot it. Mr. Mudge called twice, and made inquiries, from which Winnie inferred that he was hopelessly puzzled. Milly was sure that he had found a clew, but if so, he did not impart his discoveries.

The mystic evening arrived. Cynthia, who, for some reason inexplicable to us, was in a highly self-satisfied and gracious mood, invited Polo to sleep with her in order that she might

be able to attend the party. It was necessary to prefer this request to our corridor teacher, Miss Noakes, who gave us a very grudging consent; but we cared very little for her iciness since we had effected our wishes.

The girls met in the studio, where all were draped in sheets, a small mask cut from white cotton cloth tied on, and a pillow case fitted about the back of the head in the fashion of a long capuchin hood. When thus robed our dearest friends were unrecognizable. Then, marshalled by Winnie, the company of spectres paraded through the hall and down the main staircase. Miss Noakes and the other teachers stood in their doors and watched the procession, but as it was known that we had Madame's permission no attempt was made to stop us, and we passed on unabashed. Arrived at the lower floor each of the guests was securely blindfolded and conducted by one of our ten down the cellar stairs, and through winding passages to the laundry, which had been converted for the evening into an auditorium, sheets having been hung on clothes-lines across one end, and the space in front filled with camp chairs brought from the recitation rooms. The set tubs on one side of the improvised stage were fitted up as boxes,

while a semi-circle of clothes-baskets marked the space assigned to the comb orchestra. As fast as the girls arrived in the laundry they were seated, and when the last instalment was in position the lights were turned nearly out, and they were told to remove the handkerchiefs which bandaged their eyes. At the same time the comb orchestra, led by Cynthia, struck up a dismal dirge-like overture, broken in upon at intervals by a tremendous thump with a potato masher on the great copper boiler. The curtain was drawn slowly aside, the lights suddenly turned on, and the play began. Adelaide made a very beautiful *Fabiola.* Winnie acted the part of *Pancratius* with great expression. Milly looked the saintly *Agnes* to perfection. I was *Sebastian.* We did not indulge in all the dialogue with which the book is overloaded. Our play was rather a series of tableaux, for which I had painted the scenery with the assistance of the other art students. Professor Waite had borrowed various classical properties from his brother artists for us. The plaster casts of the studio were made to serve as marble statues, and Madame had sent us several palms in urn-shaped pots.

When the play was nearly over, Polo, who

had acted as doorkeeper, made her way behind the scenes and took my attention from the prompter's book with the horrified whisper, "If you please, there are two girls out there that are boys."

"Who? Where? How do you know it?" I asked in a breath.

"They came in at the end of the procession, without any guides, and sat down near the door, apart from the others. One is little enough to be a girl, but the other is taller, even, than Miss Adelaide."

"It is Snooks," Winnie exclaimed. "Just like her to come spying and speculating here to see what we are up to."

"If that's so, Miss Noakes has bigger feet than I ever gave her credit for," Polo replied; "and she wears boots too."

"Then those cadets have actually dared!" Winnie exclaimed, and Milly gave a little shriek. "Oh, that horrid Stacey Fitz Simmons!"

"Hush!" commanded Winnie. "We will make them wish they had never been born. Oh, I will manage these gay young gentlemen. Go back to your post, Polo. Keep the door locked, and be sure that no one leaves ex-

cept in the regular order and conducted by her guide."

A few moments later and the curtains were drawn at the close of the final act, tremendous applause testifying the approval of the audience. Winnie now stepped to the front of the curtain and announced that the ghosts must now each submit once more to be blindfolded and "to be led through the grewsome and labyrinthine catacombs to the Feast of the Ghouls."

Little Breeze and Milly first led away two of the girls, and then Winnie stepped boldly up to the taller of the two suspected intruders and offered to blindfold him. The rogue could only follow the example of those who had preceded him, and submit with a good grace, as any other course would have led to detection. I followed with the shorter impostor, tying the handkerchief very tight, and detecting the odor of cigarettes as I did so. Winnie beckoned to me to follow, and conducted her victim to the root cellar, a dark, unwholesome little room, with a small grated window—a veritable dungeon. We led our prisoners into the centre of this gloomy cell, and, making them kneel on

the cemented floor, bade them remain there until the coming of the ghouls. Hastening from the place, we chained and padlocked the door securely.

"Now that we have secured our prisoners, what do you propose to do with them?" I asked of Winnie.

"Call the Amen Corner together after supper to deliberate on their fate. In the mean time they are very well off where they are. I fancy they will hardly care to repeat this experiment."

We returned to the laundry and continued the ceremony of leading our guests to the supper. When all had been led in, the bandages were removed from their eyes, and they found themselves before tables provided with plates, knives, and forks, but no edibles. Little Breeze, beating upon a tin pan with a great beef bone, called the meeting to order, and, indicating the preserve closet, announced that the ghouls would now search the neighboring tombs for their prey. At the same time the door of the preserve closet was thrown open, and Trude Middleton set the example by capturing a can of peaches. The girls fancied that they were robbing the pantry, and this gave zest to the performance

to a few of the more reckless ones, but the rest held back, and Winnie found it necessary to circulate the whisper that even this apparently high-handed proceeding was authorized by Madame, before the raid became general. A very heterogeneous repast, consisting of pickles, crackers, dried apples, canned fruit, prunes, dried beef, and lemonade hastily mixed in a great earthen bowl, was now participated in by the hilarious ghouls. One bowl of the lemonade was ruined, after the lemons and sugar were mingled, by a ludicrous mistake. Milly, mistaking it for water, filled the bowl from a jar of liquid bluing. The error was discovered when we began filling some empty jelly tumblers with the strange blue mixture, and, fortunately, no one was poisoned by drinking the ghoulish liquor.

Under cover of the confusion I managed to tell Adelaide of the captives in the cellar, and later in the evening, while the ghosts were engaged in a Virginia Reel in the long underground passage leading from the furnace room to the other end of the school building, met in solemn conclave to deliberate on their fate. Adelaide was for delivering the keys to Madame with a statement of the case. Cynthia argued strongly in favor of releas-

ing the young men, sending them home, and saying nothing about it. While we were in the midst of the argument, a far away cry was heard. It was from Polo, who had been left to guard the door of the root cellar. We rushed to the spot, only to find that the rusty staple had yielded to the efforts of two athletic boys, one of whom was heavy of weight as well as strong of muscle, and had been forced out of the wall, and our captives had escaped. Polo had followed them in their flight, and returned breathless to report that they had made a dash, not for the outside door, but straight up the great staircase to the studio and had then descended the turret staircase, showing clearly that they had made their entrance in the same way.

We talked the matter over for a long time. How could they have known of this staircase, and have timed their coming so as to follow the procession of sheeted ghosts as they left the studio for their march to the lower regions? The suspicion instantly suggested itself that some one of the ten had furnished the information, and this suspicion deepened to certainty as we considered the excellence of their disguise, the sheets draped exactly as ours had been, the pillow-case Capuchin

hood fitted about the mask cut from cotton cloth. How, too, could they have entered, since Polo declared that she had locked the turret door when she came in that afternoon, and had left the key on a nail in the studio?

"Show me the nail," Winnie commanded promptly, and Polo led her to the studio. The nail was there, but the key had gone. We descended the staircase and found the lower door locked.

As we were returning to the studio we heard the door open and Professor Waite mounted the stairs, as was his usual custom at this time. "Heigho!" he exclaimed, "what are you all doing in the studio at this time of night? Oh! I forgot; this is the evening of the lark. Has it been a jovial bird? Why do you all look so solemn? By the way, Polo, I found your key in the lock on the outside of the door. It was very careless of you to leave it there; you must not let such a thing happen again. Some thief might have entered the house. I met two young men running with all their might as I came across the park. They made something of a detour to avoid me—I thought at the time that they had a suspicious look. If

you are so thoughtless a second time I shall take the key from you."

"I didn't leave it there," Polo protested. "I hung it on the nail, Miss Cynthia saw me. Didn't you, Miss Cynthia?"

But Cynthia had gone, and as the quarter-bell struck we were all reminded that we must descend to our dancers to be present at the unmasking and close the frolic. We hurried unceremoniously away without replying to Professor Waite's questions.

After we had dismissed our guests, we adjourned to the Amen Corner and we again discussed the affair. It was agreed that it was sufficiently serious to report to Madame, and to this there was only one dissenting voice—that of Cynthia's. It was too late to disturb Madame that night, but we presented ourselves at her morning office hour and told her all the circumstances of the case.

She looked very grave, but did not blame us. "I am very sorry," she said, "that some one of my pupils has abused my leniency in this way. It will of course make me hesitate to grant you such frolics in the future. The matter shall be thoroughly investigated and the offender severely punished. Again I must ask you to keep this affair strictly

among yourselves. You have kept the secret of the robbery wonderfully; be equally discrete with this. We do not as yet know certainly that these young men were cadets, and I shall not make any complaint to the head master until we have ascertained the culprits. Mr. Mudge will call to-morrow. He writes me that he has found a clue to the robbery, and we will place this matter also in his hands. You have done right to bring it directly to me, and your action only confirms the confidence I have always reposed in the Amen Corner. Be assured that the truth will out at last. Meantime don't talk this over too much, even among yourselves, for Tennyson never wrote truer lines than these:

> I never whispered a private affair
> Within the hearing of cat or mouse,
> No, not to myself in the closet alone,
> But I heard it shouted at once from the top of the house.
> Everything came to be known."

CHAPTER XI.

A FALSE SCENT.

I THINK the visit of Mr. Mudge was much dreaded by all of us, even though we longed to have the mystery cleared up. I know that Winnie, at least, trembled for the result, and she turned quite pale the next morning when she received a message from Madame to meet Mr. Mudge in her office. It was only a few moments before she returned.

"Mr. Mudge wishes to see us all," she said. "Where are the other girls? He's coming to this room in five minutes."

"Milly is in the studio, Adelaide in the music-room. Cynthia, I don't know where."

"Please summon Adelaide and Milly, I will wait for you here—I feel almost faint."

"What is the matter, Winnie?" I asked anxiously.

"Mr. Mudge says that he now knows to a certainty who the thief is, and that he will announce the name to us this morning. I am afraid, Tib, that he suspects Milly. He put me on oath this morning and made me confess something which I did not mean he should know."

"Never mind, Winnie," I replied, as reassuringly as I could, "we both know that Milly is perfectly innocent, and, as Madame said, the truth will come out at last."

Winnie shaded her face with her hands but did not reply. I brought Adelaide and Milly to the Corner, and chancing to find Cynthia, summoned her also. Mr. Mudge was in the little study parlor when I returned. He greeted me cheerfully as he stood by the cabinet polishing his glasses with a large silk handkerchief. Then he stepped across the room and examined the door leading into the studio.

'So," he said. "You have had a little bolt

put on this door. It is an old proverb that people always lock the stable after the horse has been stolen. But it is just as well, just as well. I agree with you that the thief came from that quarter, and having been so successful he may come again."

"He!" Winnie gasped.

"Yes; much as it may pain you to learn the fact, I must inform you that all indications now make it a certainty that the thief can be no other than your Professor of Art, Carrington Waite."

Milly gave a little cry and fainted dead away. The others all sprang to her assistance, but as I was quite a distance from her I did not move, and I heard Mr. Mudge give a suppressed chuckle, and remark below his breath: "Ah! my little lady, I thought that would make you show your hand."

Milly speedily recovered; and with her first breath exclaimed, "Oh, no, no! You are mistaken; it cannot be so."

"Why not?" Mr. Mudge asked. "Was not Professor Waite in the studio at the time that the robbery was committed? Did I not find the lock of this door in his tool chest? Is it not a well-known fact that he is a poor man, and yet a few days after the rob-

bery did he not deposit in the savings bank just one hundred dollars more than his quarter's salary? What stronger proof do we require?"

"I can explain all these circumstances." Milly replied eagerly, and she told the story of the broken lock, which amused Mr. Mudge greatly.

"That disposes of one bit of circumstantial evidence," he admitted; "but the other items?"

"As to the money," Milly continued, with a slight flush, "papa bought one of Mr. Waite's small pictures, and sent him a check for a hundred dollars just at the time you speak of. I think if you inquire more particularly at the bank you will find that it was papa's check which he deposited; and I can testify that he was not in the studio at the time the robbery was committed. I was lying awake and I heard him come up the stairs. He was earlier than usual. It was some time before twelve. He hardly remained a moment, merely left his canvases and paint-box, and went right away."

"That is all very well under the supposition that the robbery was committed between the time that Miss Winnie looked into the

cabinet and Miss Cynthia's discovery. But Miss Winnie has just admitted to me that the money was gone when she opened the cabinet, so the theft must have occurred before that time." Winnie threw a piteous glance at Milly, which Milly did not notice.

"But still, after Professor Waite went away," Milly insisted.

"Why are you so sure of this?" asked Mr. Mudge.

"Because, when I went to the cabinet fully five minutes after he had gone it was all there."

Mr. Mudge's gray eyes gave a snap which reminded me of the springing of a trap. "Indeed!" he said. "How many more of you young ladies investigated the cabinet during that eventful night? Will you kindly inform me, Miss Roseveldt, for what purpose you opened the cabinet, and why we are only informed of the fact in this inadvertent way."

Winnie crossed the room and deliberately placed her arm around Milly. "Milly, dear," she said, "the truth is always the best way, though it may seem the hardest way; and, whatever you may have to confess, I for one shall love you just the same."

"Perhaps it is just as well," Milly replied

cheerfully, "though Adelaide and I did not intend that Tib should know it. You remember that it was the eve of Tib's birthday; Adelaide and I each wanted to give her fifty dollars toward her European fund. So after we were sure that she must be asleep, I slipped out into the parlor and took the money from Adelaide's pigeon-hole and from my purse, and laid it on Tib's shelf, where we intended she should find it in the morning. Professor Waite had gone when I did this, so he could not have taken it. Adelaide told me to put hers with mine, for she didn't see the use of both of us going into the parlor. We were afraid we might wake the other girls."

"You did waken me, Milly dear," Winnie said. "I heard you, and standing just behind my door I saw you go to the cabinet as you have said, and take out Adelaide's money and count out fifty dollars, and then take the gold pieces from your own little purse. Then I went back to bed and did not see any more until you went away, when I stepped out and examined the cabinet, and the money was gone."

Milly did not then comprehend the terrible suspicion which had been in Winnie's mind, and she was very much pleased to find her

testimony corroborated. "Adelaide saw me, too," she said. "You were watching me all the time, weren't you, Adelaide?"

"Yes," Adelaide replied. "Tell about the note, too, Milly."

"Oh! that isn't of any consequence. After I had put the money in Tib's compartment, I thought it would be a good idea to write her a note with it, and I pulled out the shelf in the cabinet that serves as a writing desk, but I didn't write anything for I heard a noise in Tib's room. It must have been Winnie going back to bed. So I shoved the shelf in and scooted back to my own room. We didn't say anything about it in the morning because Adelaide and I didn't feel like boasting of the presents we had given Tib, especially as she never received them."

There was a great light in Winnie's eyes. It was evident that the suspicion which had poisoned her life ever since the robbery had vanished. To Winnie's satisfaction, at least, Milly had cleared herself.

Mr. Mudge, too, had certainly shared this suspicion. His announcement that Professor Waite was the culprit had been only a clever trick to make Milly criminate herself, for he had guessed her attachment to the Professor,

and felt sure that, rather than let the blame rest with him, she would confess her crime. His next question showed that he was not yet fully satisfied.

"Miss Roseveldt," he asked, "will you tell me where you obtained the money with which you paid Madame Celeste's bill for Miss Cynthia's costume the day after the robbery?"

"I would rather not tell that," Milly replied.

"I must insist upon it."

"Papa called the day before, and I confessed all about the bill to him, and he forgave me, and gave me the money."

"We know that he gave you the gold pieces which you placed in your purse, but these were stolen, and you were apparently penniless on the morning after the robbery."

"Papa drew a check for Celeste for the amount of the bill, and that was in my pocket. I did not put it in the cabinet at all. Then he said that it was a very sad, disgraceful affair, but he knew that I would never do so again, and he was glad I told him, and he forgave me freely, and now it was all over we would bury it in the Dead Sea and never let mortal man or woman know a word about it, and that is why I could not tell Winnie how I had paid

the debt. Papa said too—what was not true—that it was partly his own fault, for keeping me so short in pocket money and leaving me free to run up large bills. And then he said that he would change his tactics and give me an allowance in cash every month, and I am not to have anything charged any more, but manage my expenses as Adelaide does. And with that he gave me the gold pieces, and I told him that I wanted to give them to Tib, and he said, 'Very well, do what you please, but you will have nothing more for a fortnight, when I will give you your allowance for the coming month.'"

We each of us drew a long breath. It all seemed so simple now that Milly explained it that I wondered how we could ever have mistrusted her. Winnie clasped her more tightly. There was a look of remorse in her eyes, which told how she reproached herself for having wronged her darling.

Mr. Mudge tapped the table with his pencil thoughtfully.

"I must acknowledge, Miss Roseveldt," he said, "that you have completely cleared Professor Waite. It is perfectly evident that he could not have taken the money; but the question still remains, Who did? How long an

interval was there, Miss De Witt, between the time that Miss Roseveldt returned to her bedroom, and your examination of the cabinet?"

"I do not know exactly. I waited only until I fancied Milly might be asleep, then I slipped out softly, closed the doors opening into all the bedrooms, lighted my candle, and examined the cabinet."

"And when Miss Roseveldt left the room the money was there, and when you looked——"

"It was gone."

"It seems to me," said Cynthia maliciously, "that Winnie is placed in a very disagreeable position by these revelations. Her testimony has been very contradictory and her manner from the first, to say the least, peculiar. She acknowledges that she was awake during the time that intervened between Milly's visit to the safe and her own. If a thief came in it is very strange that she did not hear him."

"It is strange," Winnie acknowledged. "I can hardly believe it possible, but these are the facts in the case. I certainly did not take the money, as Cynthia implies."

"Tut, tut," Mr. Mudge remarked sharply. "I am convinced that the thief is not a member of the Amen Corner. I have in turn taken up the supposition that the robbery

might have been committed by each of you young ladies, beginning with Miss Cynthia and ending just now with Miss Milly, and I have proved to my own satisfaction that you are all innocent. Miss Winnie may have fallen asleep, and during her brief nap some one may have slipped in from the studio. Professor Waite had gone, but he may have left the turret door unlocked."

"I heard no one mount the stairs," said Milly.

"True, but a sneak thief might steal up so softly as to disturb no one. A man bent on such an errand does not usually whistle opera tunes, and then again the rogue may have been in the studio during Professor Waite's hasty call. You told me, Miss Armstrong, that the Professor was the only one who had a key to the turret door."

"I did," Adelaide replied, "but I was mistaken; Polo has a duplicate key."

"And who is this lawn tennis girl?"

"Polo, Mr. Mudge, not tennis. Her name is Polo, a contraction for Pauline," said Adelaide.

"Very extraordinary name. Lawn tennis is a much more suitable game for a young lady. Who is she, anyway?"

"She is a model, and a very good girl. Polo is above suspicion." Winnie remarked authoritatively.

"Hum—of course," replied Mr. Mudge. "Let me see, this Base-ball must be the young lady of whom Miss Noakes spoke to Madame as having conducted herself in a rather peculiar manner night before last, the evening of the subterranean entertainment."

We all looked up in surprise, and Mr. Mudge continued:

"Madame has confided to me the fact that you young ladies were unpleasantly intruded upon by certain unknown persons, who may, or may not, have been connected with one of our well known schools. Madame felt that they could not have effected their entrance and disguise without the connivance of some member of this household. This individual need not necessarily have been one of the young ladies; it may have been a servant. I have known it to be a fact that the chambermaids at Vassar have carried on flirtations with young gentlemen who supposed themselves to be in correspondence with Vassar girls. Now it is quite possible that your chambermaid may have heard of this frolic and have mentioned it to her admirers."

"Oh, no," we all exclaimed; while Adelaide continued: "We never mentioned it in her presence; besides, she is as stupid and honest as she is old and homely. I would as soon suspect Miss Noakes."

"But this Lawn Tennis, I beg pardon, Base-ball, of whom we were just speaking, is neither stupid, nor old, nor ugly, and we know very little in regard to her honesty——"

"That is so," Cynthia assented, and we all turned and scowled upon her.

"You tell me that she possesses a key to the turret door, and now Miss Noakes's testimony fits in like the pieces in a Chinese puzzle. On the afternoon of your entertainment Miss Noakes says that a request was preferred from you to allow Lawn Tennis—no, Croquet—to share Miss Vaughn's bedroom for the night. Miss Noakes says she felt a strange hesitancy about granting this request——"

"Not at all strange," Winnie interrupted. "It is a hesitancy which is quite habitual in her case."

Mr. Mudge waved his hand in a deprecatory manner and continued. "Miss Noakes further testifies that in the early evening, as she was sitting at her open window, the night

being especially balmy for the season, she was startled by a long whistle, which was not that of the postman. As there was no light in her own room she could look out without being observed. The gas was lighted in Miss Vaughn's room, and though from its oblique position she could not see what passed within she could recognize any one leaning from it." [See plan of Amen Corner.]

Cynthia straightened herself up, and as it seemed to me turned a trifle pale, while Mr. Mudge went on.

"Miss Noakes says that the first whistle did not appear to be noticed, and stepping on to her balcony she saw two young men, or boys, standing at the foot of the tower, looking up at Miss Vaughn's windows. She instantly retreated into her own room and awaited further developments. A second whistle, and some one in Miss Vaughn's room turned down the gas, and coming to the window gave an answering whistle. Miss Noakes says she could hardly credit her senses, for she has looked upon Miss Vaughn as a model of propriety; an instant later she observed that the girl now leaning out of the window and talking with the boys wore a dark blue Tam O'Shanter cap, and she comprehended

that it was not Miss Vaughn, but Lawn Tennis, or Cricket, or whatever her name is, who had been given permission to pass the night in Miss Vaughn's room. She could not hear the entire conversation, her desire to remain undiscovered keeping her well within her own room, but she distinctly heard one of the young men say, 'Throw it out—I'll catch it.' The girl replied, 'Here it is,' and said something about the sheets and things being on the upper landing. She added quite distinctly, 'Don't come into the studio until I give the signal.'

"Miss Noakes says she was too horrified to act promptly, as she should have done; but that a few moments later she visited the Amen Corner and found it deserted by all the young ladies with the exception of Miss Vaughn, who was studying quietly in the parlor. She asked where the others were, and was told that they were in the studio, where the procession was to form. On asking Miss Vaughn why she had not joined them, she replied that she intended to do so in a short time, but had been improving every moment for study. Miss Noakes asked for Lawn Tennis and was told that she had been appointed door-keeper for the evening. On

intimating that she had seen her in Miss Vaughn's room, Miss Vaughn had replied that this was very possible as she had just left the room."

During this relation of Mr. Mudge's, Cynthia had turned different colors, from livid purple to greenish pallor. And had several times been on the point of replying, but the lawyer-detective had continued his narrative in a sing-song, monotonous way, as though reading it from a written deposition, and had left her no opportunity for interrupting. He now turned to her and remarked:

"I repeat all this here, Miss Vaughn, in order to hear your side of the story."

"I have nothing to say," Cynthia replied sullenly.

"Then Miss Noakes's statement is substantially correct?"

"I don't understand what you are driving at." Cynthia flashed out passionately. "If you mean to insinuate that I threw the key out to some of the cadets, and helped disguise them, and gave them the signal when to join in the procession—why then all I have to say is that it is a very pretty story, but you will find it very hard to prove it."

"Not so hasty, not so hasty," replied Mr.

Mudge. "My dear young lady, if you will reflect a moment, you will perceive that nothing of this kind has been charged against you. The question does not concern you at all, but this athletic young lady—Lawn Tennis."

Mr. Mudge had become so firmly convinced in his own mind that Polo's name was Lawn Tennis that we saw the futility of correcting him and gave up the attempt.

"Mr. Mudge," Winnie exclaimed, "we protest! Cynthia, I call upon you to own up. It wasn't such a very bad frolic. You meant no particular harm. We will all sign a petition to Madame asking her to let you off. Don't let Polo be unjustly suspected. You know you did it; own up to it like a man."

But Cynthia was in no mood to own up to anything like a man, or like a decent girl. She simply turned her nose several degrees higher and remained silent.

'Your cowardly silence will not shield you," Adelaide exclaimed scornfully. "I have some letters from my brother which make me very positive that this is one of your scrapes, and I will show them to Mr. Mudge unless you confess instantly."

"I have nothing to confess," Cynthia replied in a low voice, but the words seemed to stick in her throat.

Mr. Mudge next asked us, in a thoughtful manner, whether "Lawn Tennis" was connected with the institution at the time of the robbery. I replied that she was, but that I could not see any relation between that crime and the present escapade.

"Perhaps not," Mr. Mudge replied; "and then again we never can tell what apparently trifling circumstance may lead up to the great discovery. As I have previously remarked, it is more than probable that the thief having been once successful will try the same game again. Then, too, if your thief happens to be a kleptomaniac, she could not refrain from pilfering. Have you lost anything since that eventful night?"

"Nothing whatever."

"And you have used the cabinet since as a depository for your funds?"

"Certainly," I replied. "We consider that we have used sufficient precaution in having the bolt put upon the door. The result seems to justify our confidence. To be sure, until night before last we have had no important sums to deposit."

"How about night before last?" Mr. Mudge asked.

"I had charge of the ticket money for the Home that we gained by the Catacomb

Party," I replied, "and I placed it in my division of the cabinet. There is just sixty dollars of it, and it is there now."

"And was there during the night that Lawn Tennis slept in this apartment? And she knew it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then that is very good evidence that she was not the thief on the previous occasion."

So confident was I in our security and in Polo's honesty that I unlocked the cabinet to give Mr. Mudge convincing proof. What was our astonishment to find my compartment again empty. The floor of the cabinet was as clean as though swept by a brush. The sixty dollars which we held in trust for the Home were gone!

CHAPTER XII.

THE INTER-SCHOLASTIC GAMES.

MR. MUDGE informed us that he did not intend to arrest Polo immediately, but merely to have her "shadowed," which meant that all her habits and those of her friends and relatives were to be ascertained and every movement watched.

"You will not hurt her feelings by letting her know that you suspect her?" Milly begged, and Mr. Mudge assured her that such a thing was furthest from his intention, and in his turn he urged

us not to allow Polo to imagine that we suspected her.

"We can't let her see that," Winnie replied, "since we do not suspect her in the least."

Mr. Mudge coughed. "I hope your confidence will be proved to be not misplaced," he replied; "but Miss Noakes does not share it, and I deem Miss Noakes to be a very discriminating woman."

He bowed stiffly, and for that day the conference was ended. Cynthia retired to her room, and shut the door with a bang. Milly threw herself into Winnie's arms, and Winnie caressed her and cried over her in mingled happiness and remorse—joy that Milly had been proved innocent, and repentance that she had ever doubted her.

"Oh! my darling, my darling," she sobbed; "can you ever forgive me for believing you capable of so dreadful a thing? I could not blame you if you refused to ever speak to me again."

"Don't feel so badly," Milly pleaded. "Appearances were awfully against me, and if papa had not come and helped me out just in the nick of time, I don't know what I might have been tempted to do. I have been so bad, Winnie, that I am very humble. I shall never

say I never could have done such a thing, for I cannot know what the temptation might have been. I am almost glad that you believed me so wicked, because it shows me that you would have stood by me even then. I am going to try to be a better girl for this experience, and worthier of your love."

Adelaide and I retired discretely, and talked over the new aspects of the second robbery. The trust funds must be made up between us. To help do this I subscribed the twenty dollars which Winnie had given me on my birthday, and which fortunately had been placed in my portfolio before we had regained our confidence in the cabinet, and had never been transferred to my compartment. As the other girls had not suffered this time, they made up the amount, though it necessitated considerable self-denial. It took some time for Milly to become accustomed to properly dividing her spending money, so that she need not come short before the date for receiving her allowance, but the practice was good for her and in the end she became an excellent manager.

One peculiar circumstance in regard to this robbery was remarked by Winnie—the fact that on both occasions money had only been

taken from my shelf. It was true that Adelaide and Milly had each lost fifty dollars the the first night, but not until it had been taken by Milly from their hoards and placed with mine.

"It would seem," said Adelaide, "as if the thief had a special grudge against Tib; a determination that she shall not save up enough to go to Europe next year."

"It can't be that," Winnie replied, "for although the last sum stolen was taken from Tib's compartment, it was not her money. The whole thing is very peculiar, and seems to be the work of some unreasoning agent, for this time, as the last, Adelaide had some bills lying loosely in her pigeon hole in full sight, which were not touched at all. I have heard of things having been stolen by jackdaws and mice—and monkeys—and I believe there has been some monkey business here."

"I heard a story when I was in Boston," said Adelaide. "It was told me by a member of a prominent firm of jewellers. It is the custom at the close of the day for one of the clerks to lock up all the jewelry in the safe for the night. He had done so, and was just about to leave the store when a box containing a valuable pair of diamond sleeve

buttons was handed him. It was late, and as it would take some time to go over the combination which locked and unlocked the safe, he tucked the little box far under the safe and thrust some old newspapers in front of it. In the morning when he searched for it, what was his consternation to find that the sleeve buttons were gone. The box was there, but some one had opened it and abstracted the sleeve buttons. He reported the loss at once to one of the members of the firm, who reproved him for his carelessness in not unlocking the safe and placing the box where it would have been secure. Then the gentlemen put their heads together to track the thief; and some one suggested that he had seen mice in the store, and this might be their work. The safe was moved, and a small hole was discovered in the base-board of the room. A carpenter was sent for and the wall opened, and there, cozily established in a nest formed of twine and nibbled paper, and other odds and ends, a family of little pink mice was discovered, and in their nest were the missing sleeve buttons. The mother mouse had evidently been attracted by the glitter of the gems, for she had taken great pains to convey them to her home. She had stored here many

other curious articles: pieces of shiny tin foil, which she may have used as mirrors; bits of broken glass, and scraps of narrow, bright ribbon, intended for tying the boxes, all showing that she had an eye for decorative art. I am very sorry that it was considered best to kill her, for I believe that mouse could have been educated. Now, the reason that I have told this long story is that I half suspect that this is a case of mouse, and not, as Winnie says, of monkey business."

Winnie immediately examined the cabinet. The panelling was intact, not even worm-eaten; it fitted apparently as closely as the covering of a drum; not a crevice large enough for even a cricket to penetrate.

"It is very mysterious, all the same," Winnie remarked; "but I here and now vow, in the presence of these witnesses, to make this mystery mine, and to unravel it before the close of school, so surely as my name is Witch Winnie."

From that time we spoke of the affair of the cabinet as Witch Winnie's mystery, and we all had faith that some way or other Winnie would find the clue if Mr. Mudge did not.

One day in May she said: "I feel as if there was something uncanny about the cabi-

net itself. I wonder who was its first owner. Perhaps Lucrezia Borgia kept her poisons in it, and it is haunted by dreadful secrets of the middle ages. It may be that Lorenzo de Medici confided to its keeping a will, giving back to Florence the city's liberties, and that this will was stolen by the Magnificent's heir while the poor man lay dying. We can imagine that the ghost of the guilty man having, as Mr. Mudge says, been once successful, has contracted a habit of stealing from the cabinet, and comes in the wee small hours with stealthy tread to take whatever occupies the spot where once Lorenzo's testament reposed."

"What a romantic idea!" Milly murmured. "You could make a lovely composition out of it, Winnie."

"Good idea!" Winnie exclaimed. "I will. I have got to have something for the closing exercises of school, and Madame advised me to write on Raphael. She said that Professor Waite's lectures on the Italian artists ought to inspire me. Some way they never have, but this old cabinet does. I shall pretend that I have found a package of letters in a secret compartment; and in this package I shall tell all the early history of Raphael—

which is not known to the world—his love story with Maria Bibbiena, and all the criticism and envy which he must have undergone before he arrived at success. It will be great fun and I shall go to work at once. No, I shall not go to see the inter-scholastic games to-morrow. I shall have a solid quiet afternoon to myself while you girls are skylarking, and I shall have to work like a house on fire on every Saturday I can get to make my essay the success which I mean it shall be."

From this decision we could not move her, though it greatly disappointed Milly, who desired that Mr. Van Silver should meet Winnie. Mrs. Roseveldt had returned from the South, and had consented to chaperone the girls, Mr. Van Silver taking us out on his handsome coach.

It was a perfect day and the drive to the Berkeley Oval, where the games took place, was a delightful one.

Mr. Van Silver's Brewster coach was a glorious affair. It was painted canary yellow. The four horses were perfectly matched roans. The grooms were in liveries of bottle-green coats with white breeches and top boots faced with yellow. Mr. Van Silver wore a light-coloured overcoat, and the lap robe

was of white broadcloth. All the brass about the harness had been burnished till it shone like gold. Mrs. Roseveldt and Milly sat beside him on the box. Mrs. Roseveldt wore a Paris costume of white cloth with Louis XVI jacket with velvet sleeves and vest heavily embroidered in gold. A little bonnet formed of gold beads fitted her aristocratic head like a coronet. Milly was bewitchingly pretty in a fawn coloured shoulder cape, and a pancake hat piled with yellow buttercups. She seemed, as Adelaide said, cut out of a piece with her surroundings. Adelaide and I occupied the back seat, with Little Breeze beside us in the place which had been intended for Winnie. Little Breeze wore a simple spring suit and I had only one best gown—a gray cashmere; but Adelaide made up for our simplicity. Her dress was not very expensive, but Milly's exclamation that it was "too exasperatingly, excruciatingly becoming" will give an idea of its effect. It was a white foulard, sprigged in black and caught here and there with black velvet bows; there was a vest of fluffy white chiffon, and her hat was trimmed with white marabout pompons powdered with black. The costume was her own design, executed by Miss Billings. She

carried a cheap white silk parasol, made to look elaborate by a cover constructed from an old black lace flounce.

"Papa has forbidden me ever to enter Celeste's rooms again," Milly said to Adelaide; "and I am sure if Miss Billings can make me look as *recherché* as you do, she is good enough for me."

"I seem fated never to meet Miss Winnie," Mr. Van Silver said as he started.

"She is to visit us during the summer," said Mrs. Roseveldt, "and you must come out to the Pier and see her."

"You are very good, but I am going to take my coach over to the other side this summer. My mother is visiting at the castle of the Earl of Cairngorm and wants me to take a lot of people for a coaching trip through the Scottish Highlands."

"How many of our friends are going to Europe in the summer," Adelaide remarked. "Professor Waite told me he intended to return to France for a term of years, and Tib here is going over to study——"

"I'm afraid not," I replied doubtfully.

"Oh, yes you are," Milly insisted; "that will all come out right."

"What a lovely day for the games," Mrs.

Roseveldt remarked. "What is your favorite school, Milly? Columbia, Berkeley, Cutler, Morse? Oh! yes, I remember—the cadets. But where is your badge? I see that Miss Armstrong and Miss Smith wear theirs quite conspicuously, and Mr. Van Silver, too, has decorated his whip and the coach horn with the cadet colours."

"Adelaide has a brother among the cadets, which accounts for her preference," Milly replied evasively; "but I don't see why I should prefer them to any other school."

"Why, have you forgotten," Mrs. Roseveldt asked, much surprised, "your old friend Stacey Fitz Simmons is a cadet?"

Milly tossed her head disdainfully. She could not tell the story of the intrusion of the two boys whom we believed to be cadets, for we had promised Madame not to bruit it abroad; but her reason for not wearing the cadet colours was her indignation on account of this act. She believed, or affected to believe, that one of these boys was Stacey, and she had determined to punish him for the outrage. "Girls," she had said, before leaving, "after the insult which our school has received from the cadets, I do not see how any of you can wear their colours."

for insertion even in his wide mouth, also flaunted the school colours. Our coach had hardly taken its position before Stacey and Jim spied it and came toward us. Stacey was in running costume—"undress uniform," he called it—but he had knotted a rose-coloured Russian bath gown about him to keep him from taking cold.

"Doesn't he look exactly like a girl?" Milly remarked as he approached, and then she gave him a curt little bow and turned with great *empressement* to Professor Waite, who had come out on horseback, and who now rode up, hoping for a word with Adelaide. But Jim had clambered up on the wheel on the other side of the coach, and Adelaide was glad of this excuse to turn her back squarely on Professor Waite, who felt the avoidance and would have turned instantly away had not Milly insisted on introducing him to her mother. Meantime Stacey stood quite neglected. I longed to speak to him, but as I had never been introduced, did not dare to do so. Just as a hot flush was sweeping up toward his forehead, Mr. Van Silver, whose attention had been taken up with his horses, noticed him. "Hello, Stacey," he cried, "make that little chap get down off that

wheel, will you? These horses are pretty nervous, even with the grooms at their heads. They are not used to all this racket. See how they are pawing up the driveway."

Stacey laughed. "Jim is a splendid wheelman," he said. "You needn't be afraid for him. But aren't you going to get down? You can see ever so much better from the grand stand. Did the girls get the tickets that Jim and I sent?"

Adelaide acknowledged the receipt of the tickets, and spoke so pleasantly that Stacey seemed a little comforted. One of the grooms set up the steps and we all climbed down, Stacey assisting. When it was Milly's turn he spoke to her very earnestly in a low tone, but Milly did not reply. Mr. Van Silver called to us to keep together, and led the way to seats near the centre of the stand; and Stacey retired to the field, much displeased and puzzled by Milly's conduct.

Professor Waite looked after us longingly. He did not dare to leave his horse, and he was disappointed that we had left the coach, near which he had intended to hover.

"How very provokingly things do arrange themselves," I thought to myself. "Cupid must certainly be playing a game of cross pur-

poses with us. Here is Stacey longing for a kind word from Milly, and Milly breaking her little heart for Professor Waite, and Professor Waite desperate because of Adelaide's indifference, Adelaide trying politely to entertain Mr. Van Silver, who, in his turn, is provoked because Winnie has not come; and I, who would be very grateful if any of these gentlemen would be agreeable to me—left quite out in the cold, without the shadow of an admirer."

I soon forgot this circumstance, however, in my interest in the games.

"There is the cup," said Mr. Van Silver, "on that table with the gold and silver medals. Berkeley holds it now. See, it is draped with blue and gold ribbons, the Berkeley colours. The school which wins the greatest number of points will take it after the games are over. This is the first heat of the hundred yard dash. Now we shall see some fun. It's a foregone conclusion that Allen of Berkeley will win. He does not enter for long distances, but as a sprinter he has no equal in the other schools." Very easily and handsomely Allen won this race and several others.

Then we admired the light and graceful way

in which an agile youth took the hurdles, and the professional style of two walkers, and after this my glance wandered for a time over the spectators.

Cynthia Vaughn and Rossario Ricos had come out in the cars, chaperoned by Miss Noakes. They did not desire her company, and it was a great bore to her to come, but Madame would not let the girls come unattended. I was much surprised presently to see a gentleman make his way to her side. I nudged Adelaide, exclaiming under my breath, "Only see, Miss Noakes actually has an admirer!"

Adelaide lifted her opera-glass. "Tib," she ejaculated, "it is Mr. Mudge. You know he said she was a most discriminating woman. See, she is so much entertained that she does not notice that Ricos and Buttertub have made their way to Cynthia and are talking with her."

"Mr. Mudge notices them, though," I replied; "see how sharply he eyes them."

Mr. Mudge came to us presently, and chatted pleasantly in regard to the games.

"I did not know that you were so much interested in athletics," I remarked.

"A lawyer and a detective must be inter-

ested in everything which interests his clients," he replied.

"Did you come out alone?" I asked, more for the purpose of making conversation than from any desire to know.

"No; I had very charming company," he replied.

"Miss Noakes?" Adelaide asked mischievously.

Mr. Mudge looked at her with stern reproof in his gray eyes.

"Lawn Tennis," he remarked snappishly. "I came out with that young lady, though she is quite unconscious of my escort."

"What! is Polo here?" I asked.

"One of the most interested spectators. Her eyes are nearly popping out of her head with every strain of the muscles of that tug-of-war team."

The team to which Mr. Mudge referred was now pulling, and was made up of members of the Cadet School. They were finely developed young men, and in their leather apron-like protections, with their muscular arms and glowing faces, looked like blacksmiths' apprentices. They lay on the cleats, pulling at the great rope, and the cords swelled in their necks, as from time to time they ground their

teeth, and threw their heads back with a jerk, which told how intense was the strain. The trainer of the team, a wiry, eager young man, in a jockey cap, stood with his hands on his knees, watching the white mark on the rope, which the team were very slowly working toward their side.

"That is a professional trainer," said Mr. Van Silver. "He has coached the cadets, and is intensely interested in their success."

At intervals, the captain and anchor of the cadets uttered exclamations of encouragement to his team, or vituperated at the other. "We're in it, boys, we're in it," he shrieked, as he gave another twist to the rope. "Steady, hold your own, and you'll pull 'em right off the cleats. Heave, now—heave! Oh! those fellows don't know how to pull," he cried again; "they're weakening! See how purple they're getting in the face. Hold on another two seconds, and you'll pull them into the middle of next week."

"What a noisy fellow!" Adelaide remarked. "Why doesn't Colonel Grey shut him up?"

"Not he," replied Mr. Van Silver. "See how his ribald and irreverent remarks put new courage into the team. I should not wonder if they won back that three inches which the

other side pulled away from them during the first minute. Time's up. Which side won?" for the announcement of the judges was drowned in a roar of the cadet claque, led by Buttertub, who had struggled back to his place in time to head the 'Rah! 'Rah! 'Rah!

Stacey had been looking on close to the rope, and he now shouted across to Mr. Van Silver, "The cadets have it by half an inch!" and waving the skirts of his bath-robe with great *abandon*, he threw himself into the arms of the little man in the jockey cap, and hugged him enthusiastically.

"Now, notice your friend," Mr. Mudge said to me, in a low voice; and, looking in the direction in which he pointed, I saw Polo standing on one of the front seats of the bleaching boards, waving her Tam O'Shanter, and shouting as wildly as the cadets.

"I did not know that Polo knew any of the boys who go to that school," I said, much puzzled.

"I don't believe she does," Mr. Mudge replied, "but Terwilliger, the trainer there, is her brother, and he hasn't the best record that was ever known. He was a jockey in England, but outgrew that profession, and has been a little of everything since. He came over to this

country on the Earl of Cairngorm's yacht. He was associated shortly after with a noted pickpocket called Limber Tim, and some months since was sent with him to the Island to serve a term of imprisonment for participation in a confidence swindle. All of which, you see, has a rather damaging look for your friend Lawn Tennis. What I would like to know is, how he ever came to get the position of trainer at the Cadet School."

"The boys seem to be very fond of him," I ventured.

"Naturally; it was his training which has just won the school this event. Did you notice that young swell, Fitz Simmons, give him a greenback as soon as the victory was assured. I have not been able to discover yet whether Terwilliger has renewed his friendship with Limber Tim. If he has, it is more than likely that they are the two unknown boys who introduced themselves into your school on the night of your party."

"Has Adelaide shown you her brother's letters?" I asked. "We think that the young man who leads the applause and Rosario Ricos's brother are the scamps."

"That supposition might be entertained provided it had been only a boyish caper;

but the two robberies can hardly be attributed to these young gentlemen."

I groaned. So our poor Polo was beginning to be "shadowed." She had told us with such delight, a few days before this, that she had found her brother. He had been away from New York for two years, but had left no stone unturned on his return in his search for them. He had a kind friend who had secured him a fine position, and she was so happy. The good news had nearly cured her mother.

I was drawn from my reverie by Adelaide's announcement that the time had come for the one mile safety bicycle race for boys under fifteen, in which Jim was to take part. This was the great event of the day for us. There were two entries from the Cadet School—Jim and Ricos.

"Ricos is certainly over fifteen," I said to Adelaide.

"He is no taller than Jim," Adelaide replied doubtfully.

"He is a little fellow," I admitted, "but those Cubans are all stunted, weazened little monkeys."

Adelaide smiled faintly, but watched the preparations for the race with straining eyes. So did all the cadets. There were many en-

tries from the other schools, but they were confident in the prowess of their own champions. The only question was which would be successful.

"Come boys," shouted Buttertub, "let's give them a rousing send-off. Whoop her up for Ricos! One, two, three,—'Rah! 'Rah! 'Rah! *Ricos!*"

A red-haired boy, whom I at once recognized as the Woodpecker, shouted from the field, "Cheer Armstrong, too!" but Buttertub either did not hear him, or wilfully disregarded his request.

Stacey's rose-coloured bath-gown was conspicuous, fluttering here and there; he got a bottle of alcohol from the trainer and was presently seen kneeling on the track, vigorously rubbing down Jim's legs. He mounted him carefully, and scrutinized every part of his little safety bicycle, with the most zealous care. The starter gave Jim the inside of the track, which was an advantage loudly contested by Ricos.

"No use kicking," Stacey remarked. "You've had one medal for cycling, and Jim is the youngest chap entered. I should like to know now just when you passed your fourteenth birthday."

Ricos was silent and sullenly took his place. Jim turned and waved his hand to his sister. Stacey was holding his bicycle, ready to push it off at the signal. How jaunty and gay he looked in his dark blue jersey, with the silver C on his breast, and with the wind blowing his blonde hair from his eager face.

"He's a jolly little chap," Mr. Van Silver remarked admiringly; and Milly murmured, "I think he's perfectly sweet."

Adelaide said nothing, but the tears came to her eyes. I think that just for that moment she was perfectly happy. Her mood was contagious. The glamour of spring was in the hazy atmosphere. The plum trees were blossoming white out beyond the track, and the blue of bursting buds and the tender green of the earliest leafage spread itself in a shimmering haze over all the sweet spring landscape. It was a good world, after all.

At the report of the starter's pistol, all of the boys were off in line, but they had hardly made half a lap when two, Jim and Ricos, shot from the rank and sped on in advance of the others.

"'Rah! 'Rah! for the cadets!" shouted Buttertub.

"'Rah! for Armstrong!" yelled the Woodpecker.

"He's second!" shouted Buttertub.

"He's first!" shrieked the Woodpecker, "and gaining every instant. 'Rah! 'Rah! 'Rah!"

"He can't keep it! Ricos won't let himself be beaten as easily as that," replied Buttertub. "See him bend to it. There, he's up with him! They're even! He's trying to get the inside! 'Rah! 'Rah!"

"Look out! there'll be a smash-up!" cried the trainer. "Keep to the right, you lummux."

"Hi!" cried Mr. Van Silver, springing to his feet, "that's a bad tumble."

"Ricos fouled him on purpose," cried the Woodpecker.

A groan ran round the stand. "They are both down—no, only one."

"Which one?" cried Adelaide.

"I don't know," I replied, but I held her down firmly on my shoulder, for I saw a rose-coloured bath-robe skimming across the field like a pink comet, and I knew that Stacey would not have manifested such concern if an accident had happened to Ricos.

"Armstrong's up!" yelled the trainer in the jockey cap. "He's mounting again!"

"He is!" ejaculated Mr. Van Silver. "By George! Jim's the pluckiest little fellow I ever saw in my life!"

For an instant the spectators went crazy with cheers, then they quieted down and watched.

Ricos swept by, he had gained the first lap easily; but only a faint cheer greeted him. It was thought by many that the collision was intended, and all eyes were fixed on the little figure in the blue jersey, now the very last in the race, but who, having been assisted to his seat by the rose-coloured bath-robe, was now wheeling manfully along in the rear. Adelaide opened her eyes and waved her handkerchief as he passed the stand.

"Go it, Jim; go it! You've got the sand," yelled the Woodpecker; while Stacey, the bath-robe cast aside, came forging up, running at Jim's side; in his friendly anxiety to see that all was right, unconsciously breaking his own previous record as a sprinter. If he had been timed just then even his most enthusiastic friends would have been astonished. But, convinced that Jim was gaining, he contented himself with cutting across the Oval to

note his place at the end of the second lap. Ricos had held his own, and passed the stand well ahead of all the other competitors; but Jim was making up and had distanced two of the laggards, his legs propelling like the driving-bars of an engine.

"He's gaining!" cried Mr. Van Silver. "I should not wonder if he caught up with the other fellow; for, see, he has two more rounds to make."

When he passed the stand for the third time and the starter rang the bell which announced that this was the last lap, Jim had passed all the others and was following Ricos at a distance of only a few rods. He looked up toward us with a pitiful smile on his wan face. "Cheer, boys, cheer!" cried the Woodpecker, "you don't applaud half enough. Whoop 'em up, Tub! Hurry up, Jim! Hurry up! Go it for all you're worth!"

"Take it easy—easy!" roared Stacey, who saw that the boy was straining every nerve. "Take your time, Jim. You've got him, now. Take—your—time!"

The spectators were nearly all silent. The boys belonging to other schools, seeing that there was no hope for their own champions, had ceased to applaud and were now deeply

interested in the two cadets. Rosario Ricos had fainted, and Miss Noakes was calling shrilly for water, but even Mr. Mudge was so much absorbed in the contest that he paid no attention to her appeal. People near me held their breath in suspense. It reminded me of Gérome's picture of the chariot race, and the fall had been not unlike the one described in "Ben Hur."

"Why is it," whispered Adelaide, "that Jim has tied a crimson ribbon just below his knee? Red is not a cadet colour; see it flutter against his leg."

I saw the crimson streak to which she referred; but a swift intimation flashed upon me that this was no ribbon, but a little rill of blood flowing from a gash cut by Ricos's wheel. I contrasted Jim's face, deadly pale, with that of Ricos's, flushed to a dark purple, and wondered whether his strength would hold out to the end. I need have had no fear, Jim was clear grit through and through. As he neared the goal he set his teeth and bent nearly flat, throwing no glance this time in our direction, but with gaze fixed straight before him, he worked the pedals with wonderful velocity and swooped forward, like a little hawk, far beyond Ricos, and past the finish, on, on, as though

the momentum of that final spurt would never be exhausted. The thunder of applause which burst forth at this exploit was something which I had never heard equalled. The spectators all stood upon the benches, the ladies waving their handkerchiefs, hats, and scarfs, crying and laughing hysterically. The men yelled and shouted themselves hoarse. Every kazoo, tin horn, rattle, and other instrument of torture sounded forth its discordant triumph. The boys stamped and hooted. The cadets, to a man, acted like raving maniacs. Even Buttertub, who had no love for Jim, led his gang with "Bully for Armstrong!" "Hi—yi—whoop, three times three and a tiger!" "Hooray! Hooray! Hooray! What's the matter with Armstrong? He's all right!"

"'Rah, 'Rah, 'Rah—ta-tara-da
Boomerum a boom-er-um.
Boom, boom, bang!"

But Jim was not all right. He heard the great roar of applause, but it sounded far, far away to his numbing senses. Then all the light went out of the sweet spring landscape, and he toppled over, bicycle and all, into Stacey's friendly arms. No one was sur-

prised to see him stretched upon the grass wrapped in the rose-coloured bath-gown, for it was a common thing for victors to faint just as they secured their laurels. "He'll be up in a minute; Stacey is rubbing his feet," Mr. Van Silver asserted reassuringly. "Good-hearted fellow, that Stacey. He's devoted to your brother." But Adelaide watched him anxiously, until a crowd of boys closed around him and hid him from her view. How terribly long he lay there—could anything serious be the matter? Suddenly Polo's brother came running toward us. "Is there any doctor on the grand stand!" he shouted; "if so, he's wanted *immejiently*."

Adelaide sprang to her feet and clambered down the ranks of seats. I followed. I have no clear idea of how we reached the ground, but we hurried on together, the boys making way for us as we came. They had an instinctive feeling that this handsome, imperious girl, with the white face, had a right to pass. A panting boy, lying with his face to the ground, looked up and asked, "What's up?"

"They can't bring Armstrong to," replied the trainer. "Looks like he is going to die."

"Glad of it," retorted the other, turning his face to the sod again. It was Ricos, deserted

by every one, unnoticed in his defeat. But through his humiliation and resentment there presently shot a pang of conscience. "What if Jim should die? Would I not be a murderer?" and with pallid face he staggered to his feet and tottered after us. The crowd around Jim opened for us. There he lay with his head on Stacey's lap. A portly surgeon, with a river of watch-chain flowing around his vest, knelt at Jim's side examining the wound below his knee. Colonel Grey, the principal of the school, a retired army officer, and a tall soldierly man, bent his white head over the doctor and inquired into Jim's condition.

"The wound is not a serious one, only a minor artery cut, which I have just tied. The only question is whether the little fellow has lost too much blood."

"Oh, my darling brother!" Adelaide cried.

"For Heaven's sake, control yourself, my dear Miss Armstrong!" exclaimed Colonel Grey. He realized the importance of not exciting Jim, and he loved the boy tenderly. He offered his arm to Adelaide now, while four of the cadets lifted Jim and bore him very gently to the piazza of the pavilion. "To think," said the Colonel, "that I was just congratulating myself on the number of points

he was winning for the school. Why, I would rather the school had not gained a single point than have had this happen."

"Darn the games," muttered Stacey, switching his bath-robe about savagely.

When we reached the piazza and Jim had been stretched on a bench, his eyes opened feebly. He recognized Adelaide fanning him and smiled.

"They are calling the mile run," said the trainer. "You entered for that, Mr. Fitz Simmons. They say you are sure of winning the race, and if you do you'll gain the cup for the school."

"Confound the race!" ejaculated Stacey. "Do you suppose I am going to leave Jim in this condition?"

"I cannot ask it, my boy," said the Colonel. But Jim's forehead furrowed slightly, and he said very feebly: "Go, Stacey; don't—let the school—lose the cup."

"Go!" cried Adelaide. "He wishes it." And Stacey strode out to the track.

Milly told me afterward that she was greatly surprised, and not a little indignant, to see him take his place with the runners, who were mustering just in front of us.

"How's Armstrong?" Mr. Van Silver called to him.

Stacey came nearer. "Badly hurt, I'm afraid," he replied.

"Then I think it is very heartless in you to run," Milly exclaimed. It was the only thing she had said to him that day. He flushed violently. "Jim begged me to do so," he said, "or else you may be sure that I would not be here."

The race was called, and Stacey threw himself into the "set," his chin protruding with bull-dog determination, but Milly's thoughtless remark had taken all of the spirit out of him. "He was the very last to get off," said the trainer. "He's running in awful bad form, too. Fifth from the front. What's he thinking of to let Harrison pass him?"

Around they came, and Stacey looked appealingly to Milly, but with nose turned in the air, she was waving the Morse colours, snatched from a girl sitting near her, and applauding the Morse champion, Emerson.

The sight stung him. He would show her that he was a better runner than the boy she had selected as her favorite, and he put forth every energy, and gained rapidly.

"I told 'em," said the trainer oracularly, "that Fitz Simmons would wake up, and sprint further on. *He* wasn't running this first lap. He ain't a-running now, he's just taking it easy, to show us some tall running toward the finish, when he'll have it all to himself."

The cadets evidently thought so too, and Stacey's own drum corps, who had brought out their drums on the top of a stage in expectation of this event, beat an encouraging charge as he came around for the second time. Stacey smiled as he recognized the familiar:

Boom a tid-e-ra-da
Boom a diddle dee,
Boom a tid-e-ra-da
Boom!

He turned for an instant, waved his hand to the boys, and then buckled down to his very best effort.

"It's one in a million
If any civilian
His figure and form can surpass,"

hummed Mr. Van Silver.

"How's that for the cup?" shouted Buttertub, who forgot personal animosities in the

school triumph. He flapped his arms like a rooster about to crow, and yelled across to the drum corps, "Who's Fitz Simmons?"

It was a well-known school cry and the boys on the stage responded lustily:

> "First in peace, first in war;
> He'll be there again, he's been there before;
> *First in the hearts of his own drum corps;*
> That's Fitz Simmons!"

Stacey was leading—only a little way now to the finish. He said to himself, "Now's the time to sprint." How strange that his muscles would *not* obey the command telegraphed to them by his brain. Strain every nerve as he did, he could not increase the pace. Emerson, the Morse flyer, shot by him with his magnificent stride, as fresh and unwearied in this final burst of speed as Milton's conception of a young archangel. Stacey staggered on, but the drum corps was suddenly silent, and there was no shout as he passed the cadet contingent. They and he knew that the contest was now hopeless. He did not look up at Milly. He knew, without looking, that she was applauding his rival, who had won the race and was now being borne off the field on the shoulders of his re-

joicing comrades, amidst their delirious cheers. Stacey finished the course, then stalked moodily a little distance and sat down upon the grass, with his forehead resting on his knees. His disappointment was very bitter. The Woodpecker, who had not run in this race, came up to Stacey with his bath-gown, which he threw thoughtfully about the exhausted runner.

"Played out, are you, Stacey?" he asked kindly. "Well, I don't wonder; you tired yourself out keeping up with Armstrong in the bicycle race. You made staving good time then, but you'd ought to have saved yourself and put in the licks now, old chap. Never mind, we all know what your record has been."

"I don't care beans for my own record," groaned Stacey, "but I've lost the school the cup, and I can never look the fellows in the face again."

CHAPTER XIII.

POLO IS SHADOWED.

POLO ran up and with her was her brother, and Mrs. Roseveldt left her seat on the stand, as soon as the mile run was decided, and joined us as we stood around Jim. She was a woman of kindly impulses in spite of her fondness for fashionable life.

"You must let me have the boy conveyed to my house," she said to Colonel Grey. "His father and mother are abroad, and you have no conveniences at the 'Barracks' for sickness."

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Roseveldt," Adelaide murmured "and will you let me come too and nurse him?"

"You had better not sacrifice your studies," Mrs. Roseveldt replied kindly. "We will have a trained nurse and you shall come and sit with him for a time every afternoon. The hospitalities of my house are just now taxed by company. I shall have to give Jim Milly's old room and put a cot in my dressing-room for the nurse."

"But my studies are of no consequence whatever in comparison with Jim," Adelaide pleaded; "and the cot in the dressing-room will do finely for me. Please let me be the nurse, Mrs. Roseveldt.

Mrs. Roseveldt, seeing how much in earnest Adelaide was, turned to the physician and asked, "Doctor, do you think that an untrained girl like Miss Adelaide, with all the good intentions in the world, is capable of nursing your patient?

"Perfectly," the physician replied. "I am assured now that the boy will recover. The artery cut was an unimportant one, but the gash just missed the tibialis; he has had a very fortunate escape. All he needs now is rest, and careful attendance, to recuperate. I have

no doubt that his sister's society would enliven and benefit him far more than that of a stranger."

"How shall I get him to my home?" Mrs. Roseveldt asked. "He is hardly able to ride on the coach."

"Some one must go to the station and telegraph for an ambulance," said the physician.

"I will undertake that service. I have a good horse here," volunteered Professor Waite, who had hurried to the pavilion as soon as he saw that Adelaide was in trouble. No one had noticed him up to this time, but Adelaide now accepted his offer very gratefully.

"Anything that I can do for you, Miss Armstrong——" Professor Waite replied; but Adelaide was not listening to him, and he left his remark unfinished.

"If we can do nothing further here," said Mrs. Roseveldt, "I will ask Mr. Van Silver to take us home at once. I would like to order some preparations for the reception of my little guest."

"If you please, Mrs. Roseveldt," said Adelaide. "I would rather wait for the ambulance and ride down with Jim."

"I will take charge of Miss Armstrong and

her brother until the arrival of the ambulance," said Colonel Grey. And so Adelaide was left.

Mrs. Roseveldt collected her party and Mr. Van Silver gathered up the reins; but before we started Milly noticed that Miss Noakes was fanning Rosario Ricos, who had only partially recovered from her fainting fit, and that the poor woman looked dejected and puzzled. "Oh, Mr. Van Silver," said Milly, "won't you invite Rosario to take Adelaide's place? She doesn't look able to go back in the cars."

"Anything you please, Miss Milly," Mr. Van Silver replied; and Milly was down from her seat in a moment, Miss Noakes accepting the offer most joyfully.

Stacey came up just as we were leaving. He made no attempt to speak to Milly, but asked Mrs. Roseveldt if he might call on Jim occasionally.

"My house is always open to you, Stacey," Mrs. Roseveldt replied kindly, and Stacey thanked her and assisted Rosario to climb up beside her.

"Aren't you going to compete for the high jump?" asked Mr. Van Silver. Stacey shook his head.

"That accident took all the starch out of you, didn't it?" Mr. Van Silver continued. "Well, I don't wonder; a nervous shock like that makes a fellow as weak as a rag. Never mind, Stacey, we'll hear from you next year at Harvard. I shouldn't wonder if you got on the 'Varsity crew."

On our way home, Mrs. Roseveldt condoled with Rosario. "I am sorry for your brother's disappointment," she said; "though we were all interested in Adelaide's brother. It is the great pity in these contests that every one cannot win."

"It was not him to lose the race what troubled me," said Rosario. "It was that he to hurt little Jim Armstrong, and some so bad boys near by to me did say he to do it upon purpose. They called him one 'chump' and 'mucker.' I know not what these words to mean, but I think that they are not of compliment."

We assured her that we did not believe it possible that her brother had intentionally hurt Jim, and she was somewhat comforted.

"Fabrique is one little wild," she said, "and his temper is not of the angels, but he could not be so bad."

"Who was that old gentleman who came and spoke to you during the games?" Mr. Van Silver asked of me.

"He is Madame's lawyer," I replied. "We see him sometimes at the school."

"Didn't I hear him mention the Earl of Cairngorm?"

"Did he? Oh, yes! I remember, he said that the Earl of Cairngorm brought Polo's brother to this country on his yacht."

"He must mean Terwilliger, the ex-jockey and cabin-boy, now trainer at the Cadet School."

"Exactly. Do you know him?"

"Rather. I got him his present position. If it had not been for me I don't think Colonel Grey would have engaged him."

"I'm so glad," I cried, "if you can vouch for his character. You see——" and then I hesitated, bound by Madame's orders not to mention our trouble.

"What interests you particularly in Terwilliger?" asked Mr. Van Silver.

"He is Polo's brother, for one thing."

"And Polo is the young lady that Miss Milly was lunching so sumptuously on turtle-soup and ice-cream the afternoon I saw you at Sherry's? I wanted to inquire whether that

large family of starving children were still subsisting on maccaroons."

"Mr. Van Silver, you are just as mean as you can be," Milly pouted.

"Oh, no! you have yet to learn my capabilities in that direction. I am glad to know that your *protégé* is a sister of my favorite, for I like Terwilliger, and I think he has had a harder time than he deserves. There is one portion of his history that I could have testified to if I had been in the city and possibly have saved his being sent unjustly to prison, so I feel that I owe it to him to do him any kindness that I can."

"What was it, Mr. Van Silver?" I asked eagerly.

"Oh! it's my secret; and as it is too late to help Terwilliger now, I shan't confess."

"Perhaps it is not too late to help him," I exclaimed. "Mr. Van Silver, I can't tell you now, but Mr. Mudge will explain everything, and when I send him to you will you please tell him all you can in Terwilliger's favor. Indeed, he never needed your friendship more."

"I'm there," Mr. Van Silver replied; "and in return what will you do for me?"

"Winnie is writing a composition on the

life of Raphael. I will copy it and send it to you," said Milly.

Mr. Van Silver made a wry face; he had not a very favorable opinion of school-girl compositions. "I would rather see the young lady herself," he replied; "but I don't believe there is any Witch Winnie. She is a Will-o'-the-Wisp, Margery Daw sort of girl."

"She is thoroughly real, I do assure you."

"What does she look like? How does she dress?"

"Well, out of doors she likes to wear a boy's jockey cap of white cloth and a jaunty little jacket, and I regret to say that she is not unfrequently seen with her hands in its pockets, and her elbows making aggressive angles."

"And, I presume, she also wears stiffly-laundried shirt waists, with men's ties, and divided skirts, and her hair is short and parted on the side, and she rides a bicycle. I know the type—the young lady who affects the masculine in her attire."

"She has just the loveliest long hair in the world, and her skirts are not divided, and she doesn't ride a bicycle, nor wear shirt waists, at least not horrid, starched, manny ones. She likes the soft, washable silk kind;

and she is a great deal more lady-like than you are, and lovely, and just splendid; so there!"

Mr. Van Silver chuckled; he liked to tease Milly.

Adelaide remained at Mrs. Roseveldt's for two weeks. Jim did not gain as fast as the physician had expected. The nervous shock and the great strain of the race after the accident had been more than the boy's slight physique could well endure.

Adelaide read to him, and played endless games of halma and backgammon, and discussed plans for the summer, or told him of the people in her tenement, in whom Jim was even more interested, if that were possible, than Adelaide herself. Polo called and brought a bouquet, for which she had paid seven cents on Fourteenth Street. Jim was glad to meet Polo when he knew that she was Terwilliger's sister, for the trainer had been especially proud of Jim, and had given him many points on bicycling.

One day when Polo was present, Jim suddenly asked Adelaide, "Say, sister, did the boys really go to your cat-combing party?"

"I don't know," Adelaide replied. "There were two suspicious characters there, but we never found out who they were."

"They was boys," Polo insisted, "and one of 'em was fat, and trod on my toe, and one of 'em was little, and smelled of cigarettes."

"If I was only back at school," Jim replied, a little fretfully, "I'd find out for you, fast enough, whether it was Buttertub and Ricos. But what can a fellow do penned up here?"

"Never mind, Jim," Adelaide replied soothingly. "The truth will all come out at last."

Polo's great eyes snapped. "Albert Edward could find out," she said. "The boys tell him lots of things."

Adelaide did not tell Polo that her brother's testimony would count for little, as he was himself suspected, and the girl went away determined to assist in unravelling the mystery.

Stacey called frequently, and Adelaide could but admire his patience with the whims of the sick boy. Jim asked him to try to find out whether Buttertub and Ricos were the intruders on our Catacomb party, and this was one of the very few requests which Jim made that Stacey refused.

"I don't want to have anything to do with those fellows," he said, "and you know I never could act the spy."

"I have been thinking," Stacey said, after Adelaide had told him Polo's history and the

needs of the Home, "that we boys might get up some sort of an athletic entertainment in behalf of the Home of the Elder Brother. The cadets all like Terwilliger, and if they knew that his little brother and sister were supported by the Home, they would all chip in willingly."

"Terwilliger has such a good salary," Adelaide replied, "that Polo tells me they intend, as soon as their mother is able to leave the hospital, to take the children from the Home, rent an apartment in my tenement, and set up housekeeping for themselves. But, if the Terwilligers do not need it, you may be sure there will always be poor children enough who do. And something might happen, Terwilliger might lose his place at your gymnasium, and not be able to support his brother and sister, after all."

Adelaide was thinking uneasily as she spoke of the cloud which shadowed Polo and her brother. What if it should be proved that the ex-convict had committed the two robberies in the Amen Corner with the assistance of his sister.

"Oh, Terwilliger won't lose his situation," Stacey remarked confidently. "Colonel Grey likes him, and so do all the fellows. He's up

on every kind of athletics; knows all the English ways of doing things, for he has been a jockey at the Ascot races and a coach to the Cambridge crew. He's so good-natured too; doesn't mind helping fellows outside of hours. He goes out rowing with me every Wednesday night in a two-oared gig on the Harlem."

"Were you rowing with him on the 10th?" Adelaide inquired eagerly, for this was the night of the Catacomb party.

"Yes," Stacey laughed, "and we were late, and I got a special blowing up for it, too. You see, they lock the door at ten, and I had to ring the janitor up, and he was raving, for he had already been disturbed to let Ricos and Buttertub in, and he was in no mood to pass it over. He reported us all to Colonel Grey, who gave us order marks for it."

"Ah!" thought Adelaide, "this is encouraging. Buttertub and Ricos were out late on the night of our party, and Stacey can prove an alibi for Terwilliger. I shall report all this to Mr. Mudge."

Jim returned persistently to the idea of the entertainment for the Home of the Elder Brother. "I wish you would see to it, Stacey. What are the boys doing now?"

"Tennis, and base-ball. You ought to see

Woodpecker; he is going to be our tennis champion; he can make the neatest underhand cut. He's simply great."

"Any better than the club down at the Pier?" Jim asked.

"What! the Sand-flies? They can't hold a candle to us."

"It would be nice to have the Cadets play the Sand-flies," Jim suggested. "Colonel Grey would give the tennis club a field-day if you asked him, and the excursion to the Pier by boat would be lovely. Mrs. Roseveldt says she's going to open her cottage earlier than usual this year, and she will get the Sand-flies interested. Say, is it a go?"

Stacey lashed his boots lightly with his riding-whip; for he was on his way to the Park for a ride.

"We couldn't make a success of the affair without Miss Milly's help," he said, "and after the way she treated me at the games I'll never ask another favor of her—never."

Jim was much distressed.

"That tournament scheme was such a good one," he said. "The Sand-flies are already interested in the Home of the Elder Brother, and we could make a big affair of it and rake in lots of money for the Home. I mean

to talk with Mrs. Roseveldt about it, any way."

"All right," Stacey replied as he rose to take his leave; "so long as you don't talk with Miss Milly. She would think it a put-up job between us."

"Now it was real vexatious in Stacey to say that," Jim remarked, after his friend had left. "I meant to have it out with Miss Milly the next time I saw her. Won't you wrestle with her, Adelaide?"

"I'm afraid it's of no use," Adelaide replied, but Jim would not give up the idea so easily. He talked it over with Mrs. Roseveldt, who approved of the tennis tournament. It would be just the thing with which to open the season. The Cadet team would be a great attraction. She would intercede with Colonel Grey to allow them to remain several days. "It must take place early in June," she said, "just after Milly's commencement exercises, and while Adelaide and you are visiting us, before your father and mother return and take you away. I will drop a line to Milly that I want her to come home for my last reception this season, and I'll invite Stacey to talk it over."

Jim was afraid that Milly might not be in-

clined to receive Stacey's proposal with favor, and he accordingly wrote her a long and labored epistle, urging her, for the sake of the Home of the Elder Brother, to bury the war hatchet. Jim's intentions were better than his spelling, which was even worse than Milly's, and his letter amused her very much. One phrase struck her as especially diverting: "Stacey says you treated him worse than a Niger."

Jim had spelled the word with an economy of g's, and a capital letter, which suggested visions of Darkest Africa. Milly laughed till she cried.

"Perhaps I have been impolite to him," she thought. Milly had a horror of being discourteous, and she wrote Jim that if Stacey would not be "soft," she would be nice to him for the sake of the Home of the Elder Brother. Jim considered this quite a triumph, and showed the letter to Stacey on the occasion of his next visit.

Stacey did not look as pleased as Jim had expected.

"Catch me being soft with her," he muttered. "I'll show Miss Milly how much I care for her airs. By the way, Jim, we are to have two invitations each to give away for the prize

essays and declamations at the close of school. I intend to invite Miss Winnie De Witt and Miss Vaughn. I thought I would mention it, as it might influence your invitations."

Jim opened his eyes aghast at what he heard. "You don't mean to say that you are not going to send Miss Milly one of your tickets?"

"Yes, I do."

"And you are going to invite that hateful, horrid Vaughn girl?"

"I heard Buttertub boast that he was going to invite her, and I thought it would be rather a pleasant thing for him to receive his ticket back again with the information that as she had already accepted mine she had no need for it."

Jim could hardly believe his ears. "Well, of all things," he said. "You shan't do it, Stacey; you shan't do it! I'll invite Miss Milly, with sister, if you don't want to, but it's a downright insult to fill her place with such a pimply faced, common, loud——"

"I do not see that it is the young lady's fault if she has a *humorous disposition*, and as for her being loud——"

"You said yourself that you could hear her hat at the Battery if she was walking in Cen-

tral Park. Sister says she toadies fearfully, and she flirted like a silly at the games, and at the drill. I think you must be hard up to ask her."

Stacey coloured, but was too proud to back down, and he left Jim in tears. Poor little fellow, as he expressed it, it seemed as if all the sticks which he tried to stand up straight were determined to fall down. He could see that something was wrong with his hero, for Stacey's disappointment at the games had cut deeply, and the boy was on the verge of falling into a dangerous state of "don't care." When Jim asked him what subject he intended to choose for his essay, Stacey said that he had about decided not to compete. The subject must be connected with Greek history or life, and he despised the whole business, and the honour wasn't worth the trouble.

Adelaide took Stacey in hand and suggested a subject, in which he manifested some interest, but all this worried Jim and kept him from recovery.

Adelaide watched him anxiously. She had at first thought it best not to notify her parents of Jim's accident, fearing to spoil their tour; but as she felt certain that he was not improving she sent a cablegram, and received

an answering one stating that they would sail for America at once. Adelaide watched eagerly for their coming. Jim pined for his mother, and one day, to give her little invalid something pleasant to look forward to, Adelaide told him that their parents were on the way home. The news did him more good than all the physician's tonics. He brightened every day and talked of his mother incessantly. Once it seemed to occur to him that his delight was a poor return for Adelaide's care, and he asked her anxiously, "You don't mind, do you, sister, that I am so glad mother is coming? You are the very best sister in all the world, but then you are not quite mother. You never can know just what she was to me when we were so very poor."

"Of course, I am not jealous, dear Jim," Adelaide replied. "I can well understand that you and mother are bound together even more closely than most mothers and sons, by that long fight together with poverty. I only wish that I had been with you to help you bear it. But then I do not know what father would have done. He suffered so much while you were lost to us, that if I had not been there to live for I think he would have died or have gone insane."

"I don't wonder that father loves you so much and is so proud of you, sister. I am very glad you were not with us when we were so very wretched. You ought not to know what it is to be poor, Adelaide. You ought to be a queen."

"I am a queen now, Jim, and I think I do know what it is to be poor. When you told me all your bitter experiences, I felt them as keenly, it seemed to me, as if I had passed through them myself. I believe that God sent us this intimate knowledge of how the poor suffer in order that we might sympathize with and help them." Then Adelaide told him of the tenement and described each of the families. Some of them Jim had known in that other life which has been related in a former volume, and he inquired eagerly for the inventor, Stephen Trimble, and for the Rumples, and others. Adelaide told him, too, of the two turtle-doves, and of the sad death of Miss Cohens, and how the Terwilligers were soon to be established in one of the best suites. This last information pleased Jim very much.

"I like Terwilliger," he said. "He is so funny; he drops all his h's, and calls everything 'bloomin'.' Buttertub is a 'bloomin'

fool,' and Stacey is a 'bloomin' swell,' and when I got hurt he said it was a 'bloomin' shame,' and Ricos was a 'bloomin' cad,' and the fellows ought to have made a 'bloomin' row' about it."

That evening it happened that Mrs. Roseveldt was to give a *musicale*, and as Jim was feeling very bright, Adelaide had consented to take part. She was a creditable performer upon the violin, and had decided upon a romance by Rubenstein. She came to the school early in the afternoon for her music, and, to give her more of a visit with us, Mrs. Roseveldt had suggested that she should remain until after dinner, promising to send the carriage for her. Stacey was expected to call that afternoon and would keep Jim from being lonely.

We were all delighted to have Adelaide with us once more, for we had missed her greatly.

I was painting in the studio, and Professor Waite had just told me that it was all for the best that I could not probably go to Europe in vacation.

"You are not ready for it," he said. "You will profit far more by European instruction after a year of thorough training in the Art

Students' League. I would advise you to attend it next winter. Our disappointments are often blessings in disguise. Providence keeps the things for which we are not prepared, saved on an upper shelf for us until we deserve them."

As he said this, a joyful hub-bub rang out in the Amen Corner, led by a wild, Comanche shriek from Polo, who happened to be in the corridor: "Miss Adelaide's come! Glory! Oh, glory!"

Professor Waite flushed and paled, took two steps impulsively toward the door, and then sat down before my easel, and began insanely to spoil a sky with idiotic dabs of green paint. I wondered whether Providence was saving up Adelaide until he deserved her. If so, the shelf was for the present a very high one.

To my surprise, Adelaide tapped at the studio door a moment later. She greeted Professor Waite cordially. "I am so glad to find you," she said, "for I want to impose upon you for a little help."

Professor Waite beamed.

"Stacey Fitz Simmons has asked me for a subject for an essay and I have suggested 'The Athletic Contests of Ancient Greece,'

as giving a subject in which he is greatly interested—athletic sports—a classical turn, suitable for the dignified occasion. At first he thought he could make nothing original of it, but would have to crib everything from books of reference; but it occurred to me that he might treat it from a rather new standpoint by taking his information from remains of ancient sculpture. I told him he had better study the casts at the Metropolitan Museum, as that would be the next best thing to attending the games at Corinth. Can you give him any additional sources of information?"

Professor Waite threw himself into the idea with enthusiasm and poured forth at once a dissertation which would have taken the highest honours at the competition. Then he made a memorandum of several works on art, which Stacey would do well to consult, and rummaged about in his portfolios for photographs of ancient statues of athletes and heroes, the procession from the frieze of the Parthenon, and the like.

When we finally got Adelaide into the Amen Corner, we scarcely gave her an opportunity to dress for the *musicale*, we had so many little nothings to talk over with her.

In the midst of it all Mr. Mudge called, and we opened fire upon him at once with the testimony which we had collected in favor of Polo and her brother. He was not greatly impressed with Stacey's avowal that he had been out rowing with Terwilliger on the night of the Catacomb party.

"I had already ascertained that he was out late that night," he said. "Miss Milly told me that young Fitz Simmons on the night of the drill threatened to attend your party. What assurance have we that he did not attend it with Terwilliger as his companion? A lark on the young gentleman's part, and a clever opportunity to steal on the part of the trainer. My assistant has discovered that Terwilliger has had no dealings with his old associate Nimble Tim since his release from prison. Having to discard the idea that Tim was his companion, I have been looking about to find another possible one. I thank you for your assistance."

Milly was very angry. With true womanly inconsistency she scouted the idea that Stacey could have had any part in the proceedings, although she was the very one who had at first suggested it.

"And here," she said, "is something which

ought to be perfectly convincing to any sane man. Polo told me last night that her brother heard Ricos and Buttertub boasting that they had fooled us all so nicely, and had seen our play. They made fun of Winnie, and said she had a little squeaky voice for so manly a part, and that it was 'nuts' to see us try to manage our togas. Oh! I'd just like to choke them."

Mr. Mudge smiled. "It is very natural," he said, "that Terwilliger should attempt to throw suspicion on some one else."

"But you know that Buttertub and Ricos were out late that night," I suggested.

"Ricos obtained permission from Colonel Grey to hear Professor Ware's lecture on Architecture, at Columbia College."

"And did they say they attended it?" Adelaide asked.

"Ricos so reported at the Barracks."

"Well, I happen to know that Professor Ware delivers those lectures on Tuesday evenings," Adelaide replied triumphantly; "and this was Wednesday night."

"Are you sure of this?"

"I am sure because I attend the lectures, and neither of those boys were there."

Mr. Mudge rubbed his brow with his pencil.

"Terwilliger's previous bad record counts against him," he said persistently.

"Mr. Mudge," I entreated, "will you do me the favor to call on a friend of ours, Mr. Van Silver, who knows all about that previous record of Terwilliger's."

"How is that?" Mr. Mudge asked, and I related my conversation with Mr. Van Silver on our return from the games.

"I will interview this gentleman," said Mr. Mudge, "for though appearances are strongly against Terwilliger, I do not wish to act on appearances alone. And meantime, if you could find some other witness than young Fitz Simmons who could prove that he and the trainer were really boating on the Harlem the night of your party, and some other witness than Terwilliger to the admission of Ricos and his friend of the dairy nickname, the cause of Lawn Tennis and her brother would be materially strengthened."

"I agree to produce such witnesses," said Winnie rashly. "I have called it my mystery and I intend to fathom it, if it takes all summer."

Mr. Mudge bowed and withdrew. His boots creaked down the hall a little way and then we heard a knock and the opening of a door.

"Girls, he's calling on Miss Noakes," Winnie cried, in high glee. "Now, what's to hinder my running out on the balcony and showing her that two can play at the game of peek-a-boo."

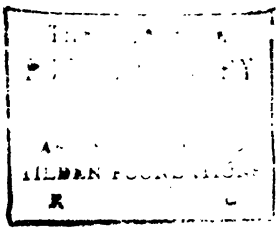
"Nothing but the honour of the Amen Corner," Adelaide remarked. The words threw a wet blanket on Winnie's proposal, but there was a flickering smile about Adelaide's lips which showed that she was bent upon mischief, a rare thing for Adelaide.

"I will wait until Mr. Mudge is gone," she said,—"I would not interrupt two young lovers for the world,—and then I think I'll call on Miss Noakes. I want her to help me translate the visit of Æneas to Queen Dido."

"That's just like Winnie," Milly exclaimed; "but you would never do such a thing."

"Won't I? You don't half know me, Milly, dear," and Adelaide actually fulfilled her threat.

"She expected him," Adelaide exclaimed, when she returned. "I found her all gotten up regardless—that low-necked black net of hers! She did look too absurd for anything, but happy is no name for it. There was a blush on her withered old cheeks, and I actually believe a real tear in her eye. When



I told her what I wanted her to translate, she glared at me haughtily, but I looked as demure as I could, and she went through it without flinching. 'Men are deceivers ever, aren't they, Miss Noakes?' I said. 'Just think of Pious Æneas behaving so cruelly to his dear Dido.' 'How should I know, child?' she replied rather curtly."

While we were laughing, Cerberus knocked to inform us that Mrs Roseveldt's carriage waited and had sent him to inquire for Miss Armstrong.

Adelaide found that Stacey had waited for her return. He woke to animation over the photographs. "This decides me," he said. "I shall try for the prize. I didn't imagine there was anything in Greek civilization that I cared a rap for; but that quoit player is fine. Just look at his muscles. I always thought that Discobolus was the fellow's name. It never dawned upon me that it meant a quoit player. And this Mercury hardly needs wings on his heels, his legs are built for a runner. And isn't that Fighting Gladiator superb? And that Hercules and Vulcan? Well, now, here is something curious. I do believe that Baker got his 'set' from that statue; the left arm is extended in the very same way,

and the boys all thought it was original with him."

So he ran on, his eyes kindling once more with enthusiasm. "Well, I must go now and 'bone' on my geometry—beastly bore; but Buttertub has been having very good marks lately, and I am not going to let him rank me."

He had hardly gone before it was time for Adelaide's Romance, and after that Mr. Van Silver came up to express his compliments.

"I was sorry Stacey could not stay to hear you play," he said, "but he seems to have a virtuous fit on, and said he must hurry to the barracks and spend the evening in study. Perhaps, however, it was only an excuse for mischief."

"Do you think so?" Adelaide asked. "It has seemed to me of late that Stacey has had little heart for anything, even for mischief."

"That's a fact. I haven't seen him on the river since the games, and he used to be very fond of rowing."

Adelaide gave a little gesture of despair. "There," she said, "I forgot to ask him whether any one knew of his going out boating, the night of our party, with Terwilliger,

and Winnie was so particular about it. How provoked she will be with me."

"Why is it that you young ladies have developed an overweening interest in Terwilliger?" asked Mr. Van Silver. They were sitting on the staircase apart from the others, and Adelaide replied:

"It is because he is suspected of a robbery which has occurred at our school. We have been cautioned not to mention it, but I think I may say as much to you, for Mr. Mudge, the detective who has been engaged to investigate the affair, told me this afternoon that he intended to interview you in regard to Terwilliger's part in the crime for which he was sent to prison."

A cloud passed over Mr. Van Silver's face. "I hoped that thing was dead and buried," he said. "It only proves that nothing is really ever settled unless it is settled right. If it will do Terwilliger any good, I will testify openly, as I ought to have done in the first place."

Adelaide looked at Mr. Van Silver wonderingly. He understood and said quickly, "I cannot bear to lose your respect, Miss Armstrong; perhaps I had better tell you just how it all happened."

"Not to gratify any curiosity on my part,"

Adelaide replied; "you might be sorry afterward. And if it is something that the world has no business to know——"

"The *World!* Heaven forbid that an account of the affair should get into the *World*, the *Herald*, or any of our newspapers. I would rather no one knew anything about it; but when I have told you the entire story you will be able to judge how much of it I ought to confide to your friend Mudge, in order to aid Terwilliger. You see, young Cairngorm is a regular cub. His father sent him across on his yacht to us. He wanted mother to comb him out, introduce him in New York circles, and get him married, if she could, to some American heiress. If you girls only knew what scamps some of those slips of nobility are you would not be so crazy for titles."

Adelaide's eyes snapped. "I do not care a fig for a title," she said indignantly. "I think a great deal more of an enterprising, hard-working, true-hearted American, than of a mere name. I think that the American pride of having accomplished some worthy work in life is much more allowable than the English pride of belonging to a leisure class."

"I beg pardon. I did not intend to be per-

sonal. When my mother saw what-sort of a specimen had been confided to her hands, she made no efforts in the matrimonial direction, but simply tried to keep the chap out of harm's way for a season, using me as her aide-de-camp. He had a passion for betting and gaming, and I was at my wits end sometimes to head him off. Terwilliger came over with him, you know; but he left the yacht on its arrival for he wanted to establish himself permanently in America. Cairngorm liked Terwilliger, tipped him handsomely on parting, and asked me to take an interest in him. I promised to look out for him and immediately forgot his existence. Terwilliger drifted about, waiting for something to turn up, and Satan, who is the only employer who is on the lookout for poor fellows who are out of work, appeared to Terwilliger, in the person of a new acquaintance, Limber Tim. Tim told him that he was connected with a sort of club devoted to athletics. It was really a gambling saloon. Tim knew of Terwilliger's acquaintance with Cairngorm, and he promised Terwilliger a five dollar bill if he would persuade Cairngorm to patronize his establishment. 'Tell him,' he said, 'that we are to have a very select game of poker to-night,

only gentlemen present, and get him to come down.'

"Now, how Terwilliger happened to be such a lamb, I can't say; but he had never heard of poker, and he asked Tim if it was anything like single stick. This amused Tim and he did not undeceive Terwilliger, who appeared at our house in search of Cairngorm, and, not finding him, left a labored epistle inviting him to come to No. — Bowery, and see some fun in the way of a sleight of hand performance with a 'poker.' Cairngorm saw through it, though Terwilliger did not, and went out after dinner without explaining where he was going. He took the note with him for fear he might forget the number of the house, and thought that he replaced it in his pocket, after consulting it under a corner gaslight; but, as his luck would have it, he dropped the note there, and a policeman, who had seen him read it, picked it up. The policeman knew that the house was a gambling saloon, and immediately surmised the truth, that this finely dressed young swell had been decoyed to his ruin. Terwilliger had begun his letter simply, 'Nobble Sur,' and our address was not on the letter, so that there was no clue to Cairngorm's identity; but he had signed his own

name in full, and the astute policeman had this bit of convincing evidence of Terwilliger's complicity in the confidence game.

"We knew nothing of this at the time, but it was late at night before Cairngorm returned to our house, and we had all been very anxious about him. His statements were to the point, for he had been thoroughly frightened. He had lost heavily, and in the midst of the game the police had raided the place, and he had escaped by springing into a dumb-waiter, which had landed him in a kitchen, where he had remained secreted until all was quiet.

"'It is very fortunate for you,' my father said sternly, 'that the police did not secure you, for in that case the reporters would have had a sensation for the morning papers, and your noble father would have learned of your lodgment in the Tombs. As it is, you had better leave New York at once. Your yacht is at Newport. I advise you to report at home as soon as possible. It is your own fault that your American visit has had so sudden and so disgraceful an ending.'

"I saw Cairngorm off, much relieved to get him off my hands, for we had very little in common, and he was so lacking in principle that my feeling for him was only one of con-

temptuous pity. On our way to Newport Cairngorm told me that Terwilliger was perfectly innocent of any connivance with the gamblers, and that as soon as he saw that they were playing for money had attempted to induce him to leave the place, using every persuasion possible, and making the gamblers very angry with him. They had tried to put him out of the room, but he had insisted on remaining, and when the police appeared it was Terwilliger who had shown Cairngorm into the dumb-waiter. Immediately after Cairngorm's departure to Scotland, I sailed for a long trip around the world, so that it was over a year before I returned to New York.

"What was my chagrin to find that Terwilliger had been arrested and sent to prison with the gamblers. My father had succeeded in keeping Cairngorm's name out of the papers, but as he believed that Terwilliger had knowingly acted as a decoy he had made no attempt to save him. Terwilliger would not disclose Cairngorm's name at the trial when confronted with the letter which he acknowledged having written. Nor did he write him asking his assistance, so determined was he not to implicate his patron in the affair. I looked up Terwilliger, and finding that he had

only a few weeks more to serve, set myself to work in earnest to secure him a good position. I told the entire story to Colonel Grey, who met him with me, on his release, and feeling confident that he had not been contaminated by his prison associations, gave him the position of trainer at his gymnasium. He has had a good record there ever since, and I have been very unhappy that he has suffered so much on my graceless friend's account. If I had known that an innocent person was to be sent to prison I would never have helped him away after his scrape, but would have insisted on his disclosing the entire truth, and braving the consequences like a man. As it is I am going to make Cairngorm do something for Terwilliger this summer. One of my grooms does not care to go to Europe with me, and if Terwilliger has nothing better to do while the cadets are on vacation, I will take him across. I shall bring him back in the fall in time for the opening of the school."

Adelaide was intensely interested in this story. "You will tell it all to Mr. Mudge, will you not?" she asked, "and convince him that Terwilliger was unjustly imprisoned."

Mr. Van Silver promised to do this, and soon after took his leave.

Adelaide had not intended to tell Jim anything of the suspicion which had fallen upon the trainer, but Jim had left his bedroom and come out upon the landing to listen to the music, and had overheard all of Mr. Van Silver's account.

When Adelaide went in to kiss Jim goodnight, she found his cheeks hot and his eyes quite wild. "You will go to Mr. Mudge right away, will you not, sister?" he urged. And he was not at all satisfied when Adelaide assured him that this was not necessary, as Mr. Mudge had promised to call on Mr. Van Silver on the following day.

The next day Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong arrived, and Jim's delight threw him into a fever of excitement. Such alternations of happiness and worry were bad for the boy, who needed calm, and Mr. Armstrong wished to remove him to Old Point Comfort, but Jim begged that he might not be taken from the city until the closing exercises of the Cadet School. "I shall be well enough to attend them, I know," he pleaded, "and I want to see sister graduate, and to know how the mystery turns out, and whether Terwilliger is all right."

To gratify the boy Mr. Armstrong took

furnished apartments fronting on Central Park, and Mrs. Armstrong devoted herself to the care of her little invalid, while Adelaide returned to school.

Commencement was near at hand, and Adelaide felt that she must work hard to pass the final examination creditably. Our life at Madame's was not all frolic, though I am conscious that my story would seem to indicate that such was the case. Naturally, a full report of the solid lessons which we learned would make a very stupid story, but the lessons formed our daily diet, and the scrapes and good times that I have chronicled occurred only at intervals.

We had what Milly called a thousand miles of desert, without even the least little oasis of fun, between the Inter-scholastic Games and the examinations. Winnie had taken a fit of serious study, and when Winnie studied she did it, as she played, with all her might. Our only lark for quite a time was a house-warming which we gave the Terwilligers. Polo told us how she was fitting up the little flat of three rooms with the assistance of her brother, and it certainly seemed as if the cloud which had shadowed her had drifted away. The largest room was the kitchen, also used as a dining-

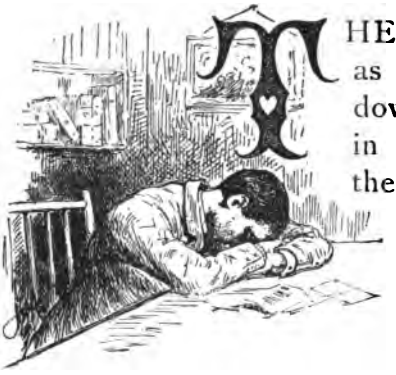
room. Adelaide had provided a range, and many other things, with the rooms. The cadets clubbed together and made Terwilliger a handsome present in money, with which he purchased a lounge, which served for his own bed, and an easy chair for his mother; and our King's Daughters Ten provided all the tinware and crockery. Madame sent down a nice bedstead and some bedding. Professor Waite contributed a neatly framed portrait of Polo, and Miss Noakes gave a box of soap. Polo purchased the table linen, towels, etc., with her own earnings, and Miss Billings hemmed them and the curtains, which were made of cheese cloth. Mrs. Roseveldt sent her carriage to take Mrs. Terwilliger from the hospital to her new home and gave a carpet, and Mr. Van Silver ordered a barrel of flour and a half ton of coal. Mrs. Armstrong selected a lamp as Jim's present, and took the two children from the Home to one of the large stores and provided them well with clothing for the summer before delivering them to their mother. It was a very happy and united family that met together that evening in Adelaide's tenement, and Mrs. Terwilliger, who had not been credited by her acquaintances as being a religious woman, ex-

claimed reverently, "It seems to me we'd orter be grateful to Providence for all these mercies;" and her son responded emphatically:

"Grateful to Providence? You bet your life, I am!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CLOUDS PART.



THEN suddenly, just as they were sitting down to the first meal in their new home, there was a knock at the door, and a policeman said: "I am sorry, Terwilliger, but you are wanted again."

"What for?" the trainer asked, thunderstruck.

"Mysterious robbery up at Madame ——'s boarding-school," replied the officer. "Mudge gave me the order for your arrest."

"Go and tell Mr. Van Silver," Terwilliger said to Polo. "He won't let me go to prison again." And Polo was off like the wind.

Mr. Van Silver came at once, and gave bail for Terwilliger's appearance at trial, so that

he did not go to prison; but this action of Mr. Mudge's showed that he felt sure that Terwilliger was the thief, and threw us all into consternation. Mr. Mudge had called on Mr. Van Silver, but had unfortunately not found him in, and while he had not received the explanation which had been given Adelaide, one of his detectives informed him that Terwilliger had made arrangements to leave the country soon in Mr. Van Silver's employ, and that he had lately been expending large sums in extravagantly fitting up an apartment for his family. It was the fear that his man might escape him, which had precipitated Mr. Mudge's action. He felt that the case was a pretty clear one, and that the trial would develop more evidence.

Winnie was at her wits' end. She had promised to produce witnesses proving that Stacey and Terwilliger were on the river the night of the Catacomb party; and in her desperation she wrote directly to Stacey in regard to it. Unfortunately, Stacey could think of no one who had seen them just at the time when the boys were known to have been in the school building, and Stacey's own testimony would not be regarded as of sufficient weight to clear Terwilliger, as Mr. Mudge

suspected Stacey of being the trainer's companion. This rendered Stacey very indignant. It seemed to him that he had trouble enough before this, and he was desperate now. His father, Commodore Fitz Simmons, was a naval officer, a bluff old sea dog, who had married, late in life, a refined and beautiful woman. She was lonely in her husband's long absences, and her heart knit itself to her son. Her husband had planned that Stacey should follow his career, but when he understood how this would afflict his wife, he partly relinquished this idea.

"You can have the training of the boy till he is eighteen," he said to his wife. "If he does you credit up to that time, I shall feel sure of him for the rest of his life, and he may have a Harvard education and follow whatever profession he pleases. But if he takes advantage of petticoat government, and develops a tendency to go wrong, I'll put him on a school ship, and let the young scamp learn what discipline is."

Commodore Fitz Simmons had been away for a long cruise, but Stacey's mother now wrote from Washington that the ship was in, and that the commodore and she would take great pleasure in attending the closing exer-

cises of his school. She hoped that her son would distinguish himself at them, and that there was no doubt about his passing his Harvard examinations, for his father had referred to their agreement that Stacey must go to sea if he had not improved his opportunities. "And you know," she added, "that I could never bear to have you both on that terrible ocean."

Stacey could not bear the thought, either, for he loathed the sea, and he suddenly faced the fact that he had not been distinguishing himself in his studies and had no certainty of passing the examinations. This suspicion of being implicated in an escapade which had a possible crime connected with it, was more than he could bear. When he read, in Winnie's letter, "Mr. Mudge suspects you," he threw the letter upon the floor and uttered such a cry that Buttertub, who was studying in the room, sprang to him, thinking that he had hurt himself.

"I don't care who knows it," Stacey cried, beside himself with despair; "I am suspected of being a thief, and it will kill my mother, and my father will just about kill me."

Buttertub gave a low whistle. "It can't be so bad as that," he said; "what do you mean?"

"Some fellows sneaked into the girls' party, and they think I was one of them and Terwilliger the other."

"Well, what if they do?" Buttertub asked. "There is nothing so killing about a little thing like that."

"Perhaps not; but there was a robbery committed in the school that very night, and that's the milk of the cocoanut."

"They can't suspect a *cadet* of being a burglar."

"Well, it looks like it," Stacey replied. "They've arrested Terwilliger, and I've just had warning that my turn may come next, unless I can prove that I was boating that night, and I can't."

"Ginger!" exclaimed Buttertub. "You are in a mess." He was on the point of confessing his own share in the escapade, when he reflected that it was not entirely his own secret, he must see Ricos first. Buttertub was naturally good-natured, and he had no idea that the frolic would take so serious a turn, but his brain worked slowly, and he did not quite see what he ought to do.

Stacey was nearly wild. He strode up and down the room. "I haven't seen father for two years, and mother has written him such

glowing accounts of me that he expects great things. It would be bad enough, without this last trouble, to have him find out what a slump I am. I can never look him in the face—never."

"Fathers are pretty rough on us fellows, sometimes," said Buttertub. He was thinking of his own father, bombastic old Bishop Buttertub, and wondering, after all, whether he could quite bear to shoulder all the consequences of his frolic. When the Bishop was angry he had been compared to a wild bull of Bashan, and Buttertub, Jr., would rather have faced a locomotive on a single track bridge than his paternal parent on a rampage. He wished now that he had not yielded to the wiles of the entrancing Cynthia, and attended the party. "Hang that girl!" he growled aloud.

"Who?" asked Stacey.

"Miss Vaughn," Buttertub replied. "Some one was saying you meant to invite her to the declamations. You are welcome to for all me."

"Hang all girls," replied Stacey. "I shan't invite any one."

Buttertub rose awkwardly. "Don't be too blue, Stacey," he said kindly. "Something's

bound to turn up," and he ambled briskly off to find Ricos. "It's tough," he said to himself, "but I'm no sneak, so here goes."

But Ricos was not in the barracks, and Buttertub, thankful for a little postponement of the evil day, went into the great hall to practice his declamation. He had chosen a dignified oration, and he possessed a sonorous voice and a pompous manner. Colonel Grey smiled as he heard him.

"You remind me strikingly of your father," he said. "I am sure that I shall see you in sacred orders one of these days. Perhaps you too will become a bishop."

Buttertub hung his head. "Better be a decent, honorable man, first," he thought. The boys were cheering over in the gymnasium: "Hip! hip! hip!"

"Yes—hypocrite," he said to himself, "I'll punch Ricos until he consents to making a clean breast of it."

But there was no need for resorting to this means of grace. Deliverance was coming, and, strange to say, through Ricos himself. Ricos had more food for remorse than Buttertub. His sister had written him from time to time of Jim's condition, and this morning he had received a letter which woke the pangs

of conscience. Mr. Armstrong had thoughtlessly told Jim of Terwilliger's arrest, and the news had affected him very seriously. He could not sleep, and he could talk and think of nothing else. The physician feared that his reason would give way. He sent for Stacey, and his friend went to him immediately, but he could give him no encouragement, and his call only made Jim worse. As Stacey left the door he met Ricos.

"You had better not call on Armstrong today," Stacey said. "He is awfully sick. I shouldn't wonder if he died. He had an attack something like this last year, but the doctor pulled him through because there was nothing on his mind to worry him; but now everything seems to be in a snarl, and he isn't strong enough to bear it. You come back with me, seeing you ain't likely to do him any good."

"It is of needcessity," Ricos said. His face was white and scared. "Rosario, she write me that he will die, and if I see him not before, and assure myself that he carry no ill-will of me to the Paradiso, then my life shall be one Purgatorio. Indeed, I must see him; it is of great needcessity."

Mrs. Armstrong also hesitated when Ricos

presented himself, but Jim heard his voice and called him eagerly.

"Ricos! Ricos! is it really you? Oh, I'm so glad!"

"Of a surety, it is I," Ricos replied. "I have come to ask your forgiveness. Alas! I am one miserable."

"I will forgive you, Ricos, if you will tell Colonel Grey all about it, so that Terwilliger need not go to prison. You know they have arrested him, and really it is he and Stacey who ought to forgive you, and not I at all."

"I do not comprehend of what you refer. I ask you to forgive me for your hurt——"

"But that is nothing! I am sorry that I beat you, Ricos. I wanted to win awfully, but I know now that you wanted the medal a great deal more than I did, and I'm so sorry Stacey did not run the best. Mother read me a verse that seemed just to be written for our games. I read it to Stacey and he said it would help him. Mother, please read it to Ricos, perhaps it will help him, too."

And Mrs. Armstrong read:

Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount

up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.

Ricos looked still more frightened. The Bible to him was a book only for priests. Jim must certainly be at the point of death, or he would not ask to have it read; but Jim spoke up earnestly:

"I suppose, Ricos, that waiting on the Lord means doing our whole duty, and I want you to do something for my sake. I want you to tell that you went to the girl's Cat-combing party. You know you went, Ricos. We are all sure of it, but nobody can prove it. Please tell Colonel Grey. It would be such a noble thing to do."

"And you will make me assurance of your forgiveness?"

"With all my heart, and I will stick up for you with all the boys."

"Thank you, my friend; now I shall enjoy some comfort of the mind. And you will tell those in Paradise that Ricos is not so devil as they may have heard."

Jim looked puzzled. He did not quite understand that Ricos's motive was fear of retribution. He thought that Jim was going to die, and he felt himself in a measure responsible for his death; but Jim's forgive-

ness and promise of intercession in his behalf was a boon to be purchased at any price, and he readily promised to disclose everything. Jim fell back upon his pillow, exhausted but happy, and fell asleep for the first time in many hours.

Ricos hurried back to the barracks. He had no scruples about implicating Buttertub in his confession, and he would have gone to Colonel Grey without consulting his friend had Buttertub not been on the lookout for him. They were each relieved to find that they had come separately to similar conclusions, and they sought Colonel Grey together.

They were obliged to wait some time, for their instructor was closeted with Mr. Mudge.

"I am just going out with this gentleman," said Colonel Grey, as he noticed them standing in the hall. "Is it anything which cannot wait?"

"It is of needcessity," said Ricos, and then his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, and Buttertub made the confession for both.

"Your acknowledgment of your fault comes just in time," said Colonel Grey. "Make your statement once more to this gentleman, and it may save an innocent class-

mate from disgrace, and our unfortunate Terwilliger from unjust imprisonment."

"You shall imprison me," said Ricos, in a theatrical manner. "That will make me one supreme happiness."

Buttertub turned pale, but did not falter, and told the story frankly and simply.

"So you are the two gentlemen who introduced yourselves in disguise into a young ladies' boarding-school," said Mr. Mudge. "Will you tell me how you made the acquaintance of Terwilliger's sister, the young lady they call Lawn Tennis, who gave you admittance."

"But it was not Terwilliger's sister at all. Miss Vaughn threw us out the key to the turret door," said Buttertub.

"A reliable witness to the affair assures me that it was Lawn Tennis. She was recognized partly by a Tam O'Shanter cap which she is in the habit of wearing."

"Miss Vaughn wore a Tam O'Shanter when she looked out of the window. She had it pulled down over her forehead."

"In view of these disclosures," Mr. Mudge said to Colonel Grey, "I shall withdraw my prosecution of Terwilliger. I have not sufficient evidence to make out a case against

him, since it is now shown that the other young gentleman, Mr. Fitz Simmons, did not visit the school on the night in question, and consequently had no motive for testifying falsely. I think any court would admit him as a competent witness in Terwilliger's behalf, and consider the *alibi* established. There will be no trial of Terwilliger. I must confess myself completely at fault in this matter."

Buttertub drew a long breath. He felt dazed and sick. Ricos swayed from side to side, and sank into a chair. Colonel Grey was bowing Mr. Mudge out, and Buttertub poured a glass of water and handed it to Ricos in his absence. "Don't give in yet, he said; "we've fixed it all right for Fitz Simmons and Terwilliger, but we've got to face the music now on our own account."

But Ricos had gone to the extent of his capabilities, and had fainted dead away. Colonel Grey returned and assisted Buttertub in restoring him to consciousness. His first words were, "When is it that we go to the prison?"

"My dear boy," said the Colonel, "you were not suspected of any connection with the robbery. But if you imagined that you would be, and made the avowal which you

did in the face of that apprehension, you deserve all the more credit."

"Shall we not be expelled, sir?" Buttertub asked.

"Never! My school has need of young men who can acknowledge a fault so honourably. I consider that your generous conduct has wiped the misdemeanour from existence. You have suffered sufficiently, and I have no fear that such a thing will ever occur again. I shall only ask you to make this acknowledgment complete by sending Madame —— a written apology for intruding in so unwarrantable a manner upon her school. I shall call upon her personally and deliver it."

"And my father will not feel that I have disgraced him," Buttertub said slowly, unconscious that he was speaking aloud.

"I shall tell the Bishop," said Colonel Grey, "that he has a son to be proud of."

Ricos staggered off to bed, and Buttertub sought Stacey and reported.

"You are a trump!" Stacey cried, "I never realized before what a hero you are. I beg your pardon for every unkind thing I have thought or said about you, and if you will accept my friendship it's yours forever. It is

time for supper now, and after that we'll find Terwilliger and tell him the news."

Jim improved rapidly after this. If Ricos had known that he would recover he might not have confessed, and there was a lingering feeling in his mind that Jim had no right to get well, and was taking a mean advantage of him in not fulfilling his part of the bargain and winging his way to Paradise, to tell the angels that Ricos was not such a bad fellow after all. Still, he never really regretted Jim's recovery or his own avowal. It cleared his conscience of a great load, and the boys, having heard that Ricos had made *amende honorable,* no longer complimented him with the terms "chump and mucker," but accepted his presents of guava jelly and other West India delicacies, and as he had the Spanish gift for guitar-playing, elected him to the banjo club.

A little after this Mrs. Roseveldt gave her last reception for that season. She had not forgotten the proposed plan of the tennis tournament at Narragansett Pier, and she invited Stacey to come and talk it up with Milly.

In spite of his declaration of war against all womankind, Stacey accepted the invitation eagerly. Stacey was himself again, yet not quite his old giddy self. The disappointment

and trouble which he had experienced had changed him for the better. He was less of a fop and more of a man, than when he tossed his baton so airily before his drum corps at the annual drill. But he was still something of an exquisite in dress. His father had given him permission to order a dress suit for the occasion of prize declamation, and Stacey besieged his tailor until he agreed to have it done in time for Mrs. Roseveldt's reception.

Milly went home the day before. We had all been invited, but had decided virtuously that we could not spare the time from our studies, while I had, as an additional reason, the knowledge that I had no costume suitable for such a grand society affair. Milly described it all afterward, and I enjoyed her description more than I would have cared for the party itself.

The mandolin club played softly in the dining-room bay-window, hidden by a bank of palms and ferns, and the lights glowed through rose-coloured shades. The supper-table, in honour of a riding club to which Mr. and Mrs. Roseveldt belonged, whose members were the guests of the evening, as far as possible suggested their favorite exercise. The table itself was horseshoe in shape; sad-

dle-rock oysters, and tongue sandwiches were served. There was whipped cream, the ices were in the form of top-boots, saddles, jockey-hats, and riding whips, and the bonbonières were satin beaver hats.

Stacey appeared early in the evening. It was the first time that Milly had seen him in a dress suit, and Milly confided to me privately that he seemed to her to have suddenly grown several inches taller. He was very grave and dignified, not at all like the old rollicking, boyish Stacey with whom Milly was familiar. Milly, quite inexplicably to herself, felt a little awed by him and was at loss for a subject of conversation. She referred to the Inter-scholastic Games, and Stacey scowled so violently that Milly saw that this was an unfortunate beginning, and hastened to change the subject to that of the proposed tournament at Narragansett Pier. They were practically alone, for the parlor had been deserted by the onslaught on the supper table, and Stacey said confidentially:

"I'll tell you just how it is, Milly; I ought not to take part in that tournament."

"Oh, do!" pleaded Milly.

"I will if you say so. It shall be just as you say, for I'll do anything for you; but if I

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go into this thing I lose every last chance of passing my examinations for Harvard. All the same, I'll do it if you want me to."

"No, no;" murmured Milly; "not at such a cost; but it can't be as bad as that. What do you mean?"

"I mean that I have made a precious fool of myself all winter. I have gone in for athletics at the expense of my studies, and I've failed in both; and now that the time is coming for my examinations it will be a tight squeeze if I pass. I made up my mind to reform after I extinguished myself at the games, and I've been cramming ever since. Do you know what the boys call me now?"

"A regular dig, I suppose."

"No, that's obsolete. At Harvard a hard student is a 'grind,' and a very hard student is a 'long-haired grind.' Woodpecker is complimentary enough to call me a 'Sutherland Sister hair invigorator grind.'"

Milly laughed.

"No laughing matter, I tell you. I've broken training. I haven't been to the oval, or on the river, or riding in the park but once since the games. Instead of that, I put myself in the hands of our Professor of Mathematics, and I am letting him give me a private

overhauling. His motto is, 'Find out what the boys don't like and give them lots of it.'"

"How horrid!" Milly murmured sympathetically.

"He's just right. If you want to put it in a little kinder way, you might say, 'Find out where the boys are weak, and then make them strong.' The trouble is I'm weak all through, so I'm having a rather serious time just now. I shall have to sit up till one o'clock to pay for the pleasure of this interview. The examinations take place between the 25th and 27th of June, inclusive. If I go into this tournament, or even think of it before then, I lose every ghost of a chance for Harvard, and will have to take to the sea, and I loathe it. But that's nothing—if you want me to do it. You don't half know me, Milly. I tell you, it's nothing at all—why I'd give up life itself for you. There isn't anything I wouldn't give up for your sake. No, you shan't run away. We've got to have it out some time, and we might as well understand one another now. I love you, Milly; I have always loved you; and if you don't like me—why, I have no use for Harvard, or life either."

He looked so despairing and yet so wildly eager, that Milly was very sorry for him,

"Of course, I like you, Stacey," she said kindly.

"You do?" he cried. "I can't believe it. You are fooling me."

"No, Stacey; but you are fooling yourself. You would be very sorry, by and bye, if I took you at your word now, and snapped you up before you had time to know your own mind. Why, Stacey, we are both of us too young to know whether we are in earnest. We ought to wait, and we ought neither of us to be bound in any way. Perhaps everything will seem very different to us four years from now. Don't you think so yourself?"

"I can never change," Stacey asserted confidently.

"But I may," Milly said with a smile, thinking of her own foolish little heart, and of how appropriate the advice she was giving to Stacey was to her own case.

"I don't believe you will," Stacey replied. "I am sure it's a great comfort to know that you care for me a little; it's a great deal better than I expected."

"Did I say so? I didn't mean to," Milly exclaimed in consternation.

"No, you haven't committed yourself to anything, but you have intimated that I may

ask you again after I have graduated from Harvard. And since I desire that time to come as soon as possible, I presume I have your permission to give up the tennis tournament and go on preparing for my examinations."

"Yes, certainly. But I'm sorry for the Home. I don't quite see how we are going to raise the money for the annex. Still, I suppose, as students, our first duty is to our studies."

"Exactly. But vacation is coming and we will see what we can do for the Home then. If your mother will only postpone the time I will see if I can get the boys together in July."

The old butler came in at this juncture with a tray of ices. He was followed by Mr. Van Silver, who protested against his introducing "coolness" between old friends, but who remained all the same, and spoiled their opportunity for any further conversation on the subject uppermost in Stacey's mind.

"I've an idea, Stacey," said Mr. Van Silver. "I want you to go to Europe with me this summer. You'd enjoy the trip I propose to make among the Scottish hills and lakes. I know your parents will approve, for it will

be a regular education for you, especially with my improving society thrown in." Mr. Van Silver winked as he said this, and he was greatly surprised when Stacey answered promptly:

"Awfully kind of you, Mr. Van Silver, but I can't go possibly."

"Why not?"

"Well, first of all, I'm bound to be conditioned on some of my studies at my Harvard examinations, and I shall have to coach all summer in a less agreeable way than the one which you suggest. Then I have engaged to get up a tennis tournament at the Pier——"

"Tennis! what's that to such a trip as I propose. Don't be an idiot, Stacey."

"It is really not an ordinary tournament," Milly added, with a desire to make peace between the two. "But, Mr. Van Silver, when do you sail? Perhaps Stacey can go after the tournament."

"I sail the last of June."

"Then there's no use talking," said Stacey.

"Unless you could join Mr. Van Silver by going over later."

Stacey shook his head vigorously. He had no desire to be expatriated this summer.

"I comprehend," said Mr. Van Silver. "The Pier possesses greater attractions than I can offer, but you needn't try to humbug me into believing that tennis is the magnet which draws you thither. Tell that to the unsophisticated, but strive not to impose on your grandfather. He has been young himself."

Mrs. Roseveldt came in with quite a party from the supper, and Stacey promptly took his leave.

When Milly confided this to me,—as she did nearly all of her joys and sorrows,—I could not help expressing my sympathy for Stacey.

"Stacey will recover," she said confidently. "Men are never as constant as we women." And Milly nodded her head with the gravity of an elderly matron who had experienced all the vicissitudes of life, and who could now regard the ardours of youthful affection and despair with a benign tolerance, as foreseeing the end from the beginning.

"Do you know, Tib," she continued, "Mr. Van Silver was joking in the way that he always does about Stacey, when papa came to us; and papa said, 'Don't put such notions in my little girl's head, Mr. Van Silver. Stacey has his college course before him and may be able to quote from my favourite poet when it

is over.' With that he took down an old volume of Praed and read something which is so cute that I copied it afterward. Here it is :

We parted ; months and years rolled by;
We met again four summers after.
Our parting was all sob and sigh ;
Our meeting was all mirth and laughter.
For in my heart's most secret cell
There had been many other lodgers :
And she was not the ball-room's belle
But only—Mrs. Something Rogers.

"I wonder whether I shall be Mrs. Rogers, or Mrs. Smith, or Mrs. What? I'd rather be just Miss Milly Roseveldt."

"And how about Professor Waite?" I asked, hardly daring to believe that the fresh wind of common sense had cleared away the old miasmatic glamour.

"Oh, Adelaide must repent. They would make such a romantic couple. I have set my heart on it. And Tib, I believe she does like him, just a little, though she hasn't found it out herself yet. I am going to take charge of their case, and some day you and I will be bridesmaids, Tib. I've planned just how it will be. It's a pity Celeste acted so. Do you really think Miss Billings will be equal to a wedding dress?"

"What, yours, Milly?"

"Mine? No, indeed. I don't want to be married. It's a great deal nicer not to be. Don't you think so?"

"Milly, darling, I really believe that you have recovered from that old folly."

"Why, of course I have—ages and centuries ago." And Milly laughed a wholesome, gay-hearted laugh, which astonished as much as it pleased me.

"Alas for woman's constancy," I laughed; "but, indeed, Milly, I am very glad that you are so thoroughly heart-whole. We will keep a jolly old maids' hall together, only you must not encourage poor Stacey."

"Why not?" asked the incomprehensible Milly. "I am sure he is a great deal happier with matters left unsettled than he would have been if I had told him that I hated him; and that would not have been true either."

"You told him that he might ask you again after he graduates, and you certainly ought not to allow him any shadow of hope when you know positively that you can never love him."

What was my surprise to hear Milly reply very seriously: "But I don't know that, Tib. Four years may change everything. Stacey

may not care a bit for me at the end of his college course. In that case, I'm sure I shan't repine. But then, again, if he should happen to hold out faithful, perhaps my stony heart may be touched by the spectacle of such devotion. Who knows?"

And Milly looked up archly, with a pretty blush that augured ill—for the old maids' hall.

CHAPTER XV.

THE OLD CABINET TELLS ITS STORY.

A FEW weeks passed with no excitement except Cynthia's withdrawal from the Amen Corner. Madame was very indignant when Mr. Mudge reported Cynthia's part in inviting the boys to attend our Catacomb party, and assisting them in entering and disguising themselves. It was rumoured that Cynthia was to be publicly expelled as a terrible example to all would-be offenders. She remained closeted in her room, whence the sound of weeping and wailing could be heard behind her locked door, but she steadily refused all overtures of sympathy on

our part. We waited upon Madame in a body, and begged her to pardon Cynthia. Madame replied that she would consider the matter, and we hurried back and shouted the hopeful news through Cynthia's keyhole. There was no reply.

"Do you think she has killed herself?" Milly asked in an awestruck whisper.

I applied my ear closely and heard stealthy steps. "She merely wishes to be let alone," I said; "perhaps we are a little too exuberant in our expressions of sympathy."

Miss Noakes entered presently and announced that Madame wished to see Cynthia; and that young lady went, with a very red nose, turned up at a very haughty angle. She returned shortly, and addressing herself to Adelaide, as she always did, even when she had something which she wished to communicate to the rest of us, said scornfully:

"Miss Armstrong, will you kindly say to the other young ladies [we were all present], that Madame has just told me that I am indebted to you for permission to remain and graduate with the class."

A murmur of satisfaction ran around the room.

Cynthia's eyes flashed fire. "Do not im-

agine for one moment," she exclaimed, "that I would accept your hypocritical condescension, if I believed that it had been offered."

"Don't you believe that we interceded with Madame?" Winnie asked.

"I believe," Cynthia replied, "that you have done the best you can, by tale-bearing, to induce Madame to expel me, and have not succeeded; and as I do not wish to associate with you any longer, I have written my parents asking them to withdraw me from the school."

"I am sure no one will regret your departure," Adelaide replied, with indignation. But Cynthia did not leave the school. Either her parents were too sensible to take her away just before her graduation, or her remark had been merely an idle threat. Madame gave her a room in another part of the building, and her place in the Amen Corner remained vacant for the rest of the term.

Winnie had finished her essay, and one evening we gathered in the little study parlor to hear her read it. The time for our parting was now very near, and we were all more or less sentimentally inclined. The old Amen Corner was very dear to us. Every piece of furniture had its associations, but none of them were quite so tragical as those which clustered

around the old oak cabinet, and it seemed only fitting that Winnie should celebrate it in her parting essay. She apologized for the length of her paper. "Don't think, girls," she explained, "that I intend to read all this at commencement. I am going to ask Madame to make selections from it. The task that Professor Waite set me was to give a picture of Florentine life in the early part of the sixteenth century, and to bring in the characters who lived then as naturally as I could—Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Fra. Bartolommeo, the Medici, Macchiavelli, Bibbiena and his niece, and others. While I was writing, my imagination carried me away, and I gave it free rein. You are the only ones who will have the full dose."

We were very willing to hear it all. Winnie sat in the great comfortable wicker arm-chair with the lamplight gloating o'er her mischievous face. Adelaide had ensconced herself on the window seat, her classical profile clear cut against the night. Milly nestled on a cushion at her feet, and I had stretched myself luxuriously on the old lounge, and watched the others from the shadowy side of the room. Milly occasionally patted the cabinet at her side as Winnie referred to it.

The flickering light almost seemed to make the carved faces with which it was decorated grin sardonically, or knit their brows with threatening scowls, as Winnie read:

"I am the ghost of the cabinet, Giovanni de' Medici they called me, in 1475, when the drops from the font fell on my forehead in the Baptistry in Florence, and Leo X, when in 1513 I was made Pope of Rome. I was the second son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Christianly christened as a babe and created Abbot of Fontedolce at the age of seven and Cardinal at seventeen, for my father was convinced, since the eldest son must carry down the family glory in succession, for me promotion lay only in the way of the Church.

"Nevertheless, I held, as it were, to that plough but with one hand, continually looking back, and ready to drop it altogether, so that, while I enjoyed the rank and revenue of a prince of the Church, I was not made a priest with vows of celibacy until the papacy was as good as in my hand, and until I had been determined thereunto by the closing to me of a fair pathway which led in quite another direction. For of my father's choice for me I might have said:

"For that my fancy rather took
The way that led to town,
He did betray me to a lingering book,
And wrap me in a gown.

"None but the readers of this confession know of my lost love or fancy that I was capable of any passion save the ambition to reinstate my family in its ancient position of glory in Florence. Cardinal though I was, I yet played the spy and the thief to get at the opinions of Florentines of note and influence, and one of my confederates in my schemes was a certain carved oak cabinet, which stood in the library of the palazzo of my nephew by marriage, Filippo Strozzi. This Strozzi was a man so well regarded in Florence, that although he espoused Maddalena de' Medici, the daughter of my banished brother Piero, yet was he never suspected of any plots to advance our family, and lived even with great freedom and popularity, keeping open house to all the literati of the city.

"My niece, who shared not altogether the republican sentiments of her husband, and in whom family affection was most deeply rooted, did sometimes entertain me after my banishment when my presence in Florence was not known by the Florentines in general or even

to her most worshipful spouse. At such times I had for my bedchamber a little room partitioned only from the library of which I have spoken by heavy hangings of tapestry. Against this tapestry, on the library side, was set the oak cabinet, which was also a desk for writing, and here my nephew, Filippo Strozzi, was accustomed to write his letters. Hearing the scratch of his pen when he little suspected my neighbourhood, filled me with such an itching desire to know what he wrote, that one night after he had finished his writing, and had left the room, I slipped into the library, and found that, having completed his epistle, he had laid it inside the cabinet, and that this was without doubt the usual rendezvous for the letters of the family while awaiting the time for the departure of the post, for other letters, sealed and directed and ready for the sending, lay on the same shelf. On further examination of the cabinet I found that its back was a sliding panel, and that by cutting through the tapestry with my penknife I could open the cabinet from my own room, and abstract any letters which might have been placed within it under surety of lock and key. This seemed to me a most providential circumstance, for not only did my nephew write

his letters here, but other guests of the house had the same custom, and it was most convenient for me thus to become acquainted with their secret opinions.

"I had another motive for lingering in Florence besides my political schemes, for as I have said I had not at this time so irrevocably fastened upon myself the vows of the church that they could not be shaken off, and I was greatly enamoured of the niece of the merry Cardinal Bibbiena, the incomparable Maria, whom I had met before my brother's banishment at his court in Florence, she being a maid in waiting to his wife and greatly attached to her.

"Maria Bibbiena came frequently to visit my niece Maddalena Strozzi; and my niece, knowing my passion, gave me opportunity of meeting her, and I thought that I sped well in my wooing until the cabinet told me otherwise. My cabinet told me no lies, for Count Baltazar Castiglione, a most polished man of the world, and guarded in his spoken opinions of others, opened his mind most frankly in a letter to his friend and confidante, the gentle and witty Vittoria Colonna, which he wrote in that room and left in my power, and which was expressed with a freedom which he would

never have allowed himself had he fancied that it would ever have fallen under my eye.

"I had one friend in Florence in whom I trusted, Nicolo Macchiavelli. I admired his statecraft and his policy, and I deemed him devoted to our family, but a letter from his own hand, obtained in like manner with the others, showed him to be two-faced and treacherous to all who trusted him—to the Medicis and to Strozzi, whose hospitality he scrupled not to abuse. It would seem at first sight that my thefts of letters were of service to me; but I was never able to really profit by them, and the knowledge which the letters gave me of the perfidy or dislike of their writers caused me only fruitless indignation and lasting pain, while the habit into which I had fallen of suspecting, prying, and stealing grew upon me day by day, till even death itself was powerless to correct it. When will mankind learn that habit can be so deeply fixed as to follow us beyond the portals of death.

"The old cabinet and I have been so long partners in guilt that my erring ghost visits it as of old, abstracting from it whatever is left to its treacherous keeping. I give back

herewith the letters, and when this confession shall have been publicly read, I will render the moneys which I have more lately filched, and then my troubled spirit will be laid at rest. For I was not a great villain.

"Witch Winnie lied when she said I stole from this cabinet the freedom of the city of Florence, which my father writ out and placed here after the last visit of the unmannerly monk, Savonarola. I pardoned the enemies of our family in the day of my triumph, and I pardoned Raphael, yea, and befriended him and loved him, since he wronged me unwittingly; and none grieved more than I when we buried him beside his Maria, whom I fain would have called my own. And so, having forgiven those who have trespassed against me, and now making restitution, may I also be pardoned for filching these few letters, whereof the first was from:

"*Count Baltazar Castiglione to the Excellent Lady Vittoria Colonna, Marchesa di Pescara, at Naples.*

"FLORENCE, 15th October, 1504.

"MOST WORSHIPFUL MADONNA AND ADMIRED FRIEND:

"I feel myself highly flattered in that you express yourself satisfied with my Cortigiano (which I caused to be writ out at your request), and which endeavoured, in some slight way, to reproduce the facetious pleasantry joined to the strictest morals which subsist at the Court

of Urbino. And I deem your request for a like picture of Florentine society as a most pleasing proof that I have not been hitherto wearisome to you.

"In Florence, since the passing of the rule of the Medici, there has been a passing away also of all standards of aristocracy, so that many of the old families hang their heads in political disgrace, and there be many upstart ones who flaunt and wanton in gorgeousness of apparel. Neither is it possible to say what will be the outcome of this state of social incertitude. I have adopted what seemed to me a safe rule, and have paid my court neither to birth nor to fortune, but to genius. For it is not to be gainsayed that there is gathered in Florence at this time a remarkable circle of learned and clever men, who form, as it were, an order of aristocracy by themselves.

"I paid my respects first to Maestro Pietro Perugino, my sometime friend at Urbino, and whom we there regarded as the very cream and quintessence of painting. He has a home here, living in a goodly and comfortable state, but has grown somewhat crabbed and soured, as happens to men who feel themselves out of fashion and forgotten of the world. He has a rival here, one Michael Angelo, and Perugino having criticised a cartoon which this fellow had set up, representing I know not what absurdity, of bathing soldiers, Angelo replied that he considered Perugino to be a man ignorant in art matters. Which saying so cut to the quick my friend that he somewhat inconsiderately went to law upon the matter, where he gained scant salve for his bruises, being dismissed with the decree that the defendant had only said what was not to be denied.

"This discourteous fellow Angelo formeth the greatest contrast to Leonardo da Vinci, now the leading artist of Florence, in whom the word gentleman hath as full a

showing as in any noble living. His fortune is sufficient to his tastes (which are of no niggard order), and his audience chamber is frequented by the nobles, the wits, the fashion, the learning, and beauty of the day.

"But truly, I must not further speak of this paragon, this florescence of his day and generation, or I shall have no space in which to make mention of lesser luminaries, and especially of my young friend, Raphael Santi of Urbino, who is also visiting at this time in Florence. Raphael, while he accords to da Vinci a full meed of praise, and goes daily to sketch from his masterpiece in the Palazzo Vecchio, and while he is as free from envy as an egg from vitriol, yet surprised me by this wondrously assuming assertion, greatly at variance with his usual modesty. 'My dear Baltazar,' said he, 'keep the sketches and miniature I have made for thee. They will one day be as valuable as though signed by da Vinci!' Truly, presumption dwelleth in the heart of youth, but experience with the world will drive it far from him.

"I am writing this at the Palazzo Strozzi, where I am for the time a grateful guest. Mine host and friend Filippo gave recently an artistic supper, the guests being either artists or lovers of that guild, whether patricians, such as Giocondo, Nasi, Soderini, and others; or scriveners, as Vasari, Macchiavelli, and Guicciardini, and churchmen, as Bibbiena, and Bembo; for all Florence will have its finger in this art pie, and they who have not the wit to paint or the money to purchase, affect superior knowledge, and wag their tongues in dispraise. Finding myself partitioned off between two of these worthies, I should have died of weariness had I not closed my ear on the one side to the borings of Macchiavelli (who had it upon his mind that Giovanni de'

Medici was in Florence, and would have fain tortured from me his hiding place), and on the other from the sleep-producing maunderings of Vasari, who delivered himself of condemnatory criticisms on Raphael. I would not for the world have awakened him to questions by a hint that I already knew more of Raphael than he was like to know in his whole life, but I suffered him to wander on, straining my ears the while to catch some shreds of a merry story with which the Cardinal of Santa Maria in Portico (Bibbiena) was setting his end of the table in a roar. Supper being ended, I marked that the Cardinal drew Raphael's arm within his own, and leading him to the garden, there left him with his niece Maria, a most sweet and loving damsel, and one exceptionally endowed by nature; for neither in Florence nor in the various outlandish cities which it hath been my hap to visit in the character of diplomatist, have I found in any five ladies, saving in yourself, worshipful madame, such gentleness, sprightliness, and wit as is bound up in one bundle in the person of Maria Bibbiena.

"Madonna Maddalena Strozzi has confided to me that her uncle Giovanni de' Medici was in time past so greatly enamoured of this same Maria that he would fain have given up the Church. This were madness indeed on his part, since the wisest policy for any of that family is to keep himself from political ambition, than which there would seem to be no more convincing evidence to the vulgar than devotion to a life of celibacy and monkish austerity; a renouncing of the world, its pomps and vanities, and especially of family alliances and succession plots, friendships, betrothals, marriages, and the like; which, if they be not fooleries of youthful passion, savour of worldly ambition.

"All of this I imparted as my opinion to my hostess,

but she sighed so deeply as to show that her sympathies are with her love-lorn uncle. After this we were bidden by her husband to an upper room, where was displayed a picture of Raphael's.

"But to report the critiques which followed would be greatly wearisome to your ladyship, and so I kiss your hands, beseeching our Lord to make you as happy as you are pious.

"Your sincere friend and servitor,

"BALTAZAR CASTIGLIONE.

"*Maria Bibbiena to the Lady Alfonsina Orsini Medici, wife of Piera de' Medici, in Exile at Urbino.*

"FLORENCE, October 12, 1504.

"MOST MAGNIFICENT, NOBLE, AND UNFORTUNATE LADY:

"For whom my tears cease not to fall, and my heart to long after with true devotion.

"Truly, madame, whatever may have been your heavy and sore trials in separation from your beloved Florence, you cannot have experienced more poignant smart than that which wrings the heart of your little friend, who in lonesomeness and delaying of hope counts the days of your absence. My uncle's friend, Messer Macchiavelli, who passes for a man of deep designs, raised my hopes at one time by whispering that there was a plot to bring you back. But nothing came of it, and instead we were given up to the dreadful Piagnoni, so that my uncle, than whom there never was a more jocund man, so long as he was chancellor to your most worshipful husband, was forced to abandon politics and even for a time to hang his head in sadness. But having returned from Rome with a cardinal's hat, since the death of Savonarola, I discern some faint return to his old cheerfulness,

"I was minded of you anew but recently. You will doubtless remember Madonna Lisa Giocondo. She is now having her portrait painted by Maestro da Vinci. It is his manner to invite light and diverting society to his studio to converse with and cheer the lady during her sitting, and to strive to bring to her lips a certain marvelous smile about which he is mightily concerned. Now it chanced that Maestro da Vinci heard that I played upon the lute at your court, in former days, and so he persuaded my uncle to bring me to his studio to play for the diversion of Mona Lisa. Presently there came in with Count Castiglione a young man of a most beautiful countenance, a divine tenderness suffusing his eyes; and a smile of such heavenly sweetness upon his lips, that methought that of Mona Lisa but an affected simper in comparison. After greeting us he remained a long time in a muse, his eyes fastened upon the canvas. Mona Lisa, perceiving that his entranced gaze was not so much in admiration of her beauty as in delight at the skill of the painter, took her departure, in some pique, while Maestro da Vinci waited upon her to the door. Raphael Santi, for so is this young man called, turned to me and spoke of the genius of da Vinci. After that the Maestro brought forward a portfolio of sketches and we overlooked them together. I mind me there was one drawing of the Madonna seated in the lap of Sta. Anna, caressing the infant Christ, who, in his turn, was toying with a lamb. And the younger artist said that what pleased him most in da Vinci's paintings was the lovingness which he displayed, as here Sta. Anna was beaming proudly and graciously upon her daughter, who playfully and tenderly yearned over her son, who as charmingly petted his little lamb. And many more things he said, so sweetly, and with such courteous and gentle behaviour,

that I wondered not that he was called Saint Raphael, for indeed he seemed unto me as one of the company of the blessed.

"But with all this I have not told you why it was that this should remind me of you. It was because I was told that he was from Urbino, and because he was able to give me comfortable tidings concerning you, which did not a little solace and unburden my heart.

"After this I met him several times in the outer cloisters of San Marco, whither I went first by chance with my uncle, who had some business with the prior of the convent, and who left me to wait for him in this place, which is assigned to the laity.

"Presently, while I waited here, Raphael came hastily in, having just completed his lesson in colouring with the Fra Bartolommeo, an artist who turned monk under the preaching of Savonarola, and whom Raphael has chosen as master during his stay in Florence. He told me somewhat of this good monk; how when he was a talented and rising young man, with life and ambition all before him, he gave his paintings to the flames with which the Piagnoni consumed the vanities of this world in the public streets, because he feared lest he loved his art more than God. But since he has renounced the world, the Prior has told him that he can best serve the Church by painting altar-pieces, so that his cell is changed to a studio, and God has granted him such access of genius that he paints more divinely than before, and churches and monasteries in Venice and other distant cities send daily for his paintings. But he knows not where they go, nor how much money they bring the convent, for he paints only for the love of God.

"Raphael told me also of the heavenly frescoes of Fra Angelico, with which the walls of the passages and even

the cells of the convent, are covered, and he added, 'Truly, I think that Art and a monastic life wed well together, and I would willingly retire to some cloistered garden afar from the world, if I might carry my box of colours with me, and might sometimes see in a vision a face like thine to paint from!'

"Then was I seized with a foolish timidity, so that I could in no wise answer, but my heart said, 'And why afar from the world, why not in it, making all things better and happier?'

"Ah! sweet lady, I know you will say, 'My little Maria is grown wondrous foolish and love-sick'; but I pray you chide me not, seeing that the matter cannot grow further, for I am not likely again to meet with Raphael, since I have come to visit for some days, on invitation of your sweet daughter Madonna Maddalena Strozzi. Nor were it best that I should see him often, for I do fear me that in such case my heart might become so rashly pitched and fixed upon him that I should in time most inconsiderately fall in love, which were a bold and unmaidenly thing to do; and I mind me that you were wont to tell me that no woman should allow her affections to conduct themselves thus insubordinately, until the church hath by the sacrament of marriage given her license thereto.

"And so, madame, praying Maria Sanctissima and Maria the sister of Lazarus, my patroness, to keep me constant in this mind. I rest your loving friend and devoted servitor, "MARIA BIBBIENA.

"*Niccolo Macchiavelli to Bramante, Architect to Pope Julius I, at Rome:*

"MESSER BRAMANTE MIO:

"We have no longer any politics in Florence. The

Medici trusted to the luck of their name ; but Florence would have none of them, and Piero had not the head for his position. He might have had the advantage of my brains if he had so chosen ; but he had not the wit to appreciate wit. The Magnificent was right when he said that he had three sons, the one good, the second crafty, the third a fool. The good die young: Piero, the fool, has lost his inheritance ; it remains for the crafty Giovanni to make good the prestige of his family. The chances are against him, but if he has something better than maccaroni under his tonsure, he will make the Church his ladder to power. I thought at one time that Savonarola was perhaps shrewder than he seemed, and that he would succeed in tumbling Alexander out of the Papal Chair and in taking his seat therein as the Pope Angelico. But it seemed that the dolt never cared for the Papacy, but only for saving souls ! I fear no such cause of defeat for a Medici, but I hear rumours concerning Giovanni which make me fear that he is not crafty enough for success. He has been dissolute ; that is no hindrance to a cardinal's hat or even to the tiara ; the folly I dread is more fatal. They say that he has reformed his life and is thinking of marriage. If this is true, I renounce his cause in favor of that of Cæsar Borgia, who has the audacity of a lion joined to the rascality of a fox, and who is not. hindered from the putting in practice of my principles by any so cowardly and stupid a thing as a conscience. And yet they say that his superb physical manhood is now a wreck, bloated and permeated through and through with the subtle poison which his family alone knows how to prepare, and whose effects they can only partially eradicate. Savonarola, Borgia, Medici, blunderers all ! What name will the next wave bring to the surface ?

"But a truce to politics. You know this is a subject from which I can no more keep my thoughts than a greedy urchin can forbear thrusting his fingers into a pot of comfits. I am not so absorbed in my favourite pastime, however, but I can take an interest in all that interests my friends, especially in such matters as are flavoured with a spice of intrigue, than which no condiment soever is better suited to my palate. Touching, therefore, the matter concerning which you wrote me, I think that you, as chief architect to his Holiness, have indeed cause to fear the rivalry of Michael Angelo, for I am credibly imformed that he is minded presently to journey toward Rome. Moreover, since it is the practice of popes to be always meddling with works of art, marring and defacing the excellent things done in the Pontificates of those preceding them,—when they cannot improve upon them, —and whereas they are a whimsical lot, not long contented with one object or one workman, be he ever so excellent, you have sufficient cause, I say, to fear, having now continued in favour for some time, that this Michael Angelo will supplant you in the favour of his Holiness. I would suggest, therefore, that you search about for some new artist, who shall occupy himself with a line of work as fresco painting, not in any way interfering with your own architectural designs, but rather depending upon them; and that you make haste to introduce him to the Pope, and if possible ingratiate him into his favour that, his mind being taken up with this new favourite, and his purse lightened by the dispensing of moneys for these new works, he will be less inclined to look favourably upon a new architect such as Michael Angelo. And inasmuch as it seemeth to me that this thing requireth haste, I have looked about me somewhat in Florence to find a man suited to your occasions.

"I first bethought me of Leonardo da Vinci as being the successful rival of Michael Angelo in this city, and against whom he could not for a moment contend. But da Vinci hath no drawings toward Rome. I have marked for a long time that he cutteth his doublet after the French fashion. Trust me, he is no man for us; he would rather trip it merrily with French dames than wear out his knees on the cold scagliola of the Vatican. I have bethought me also that Leonardo is too old and subtle for you; you need a man whom you can manage; who shall look up to you as a patron and as a superior. My eye hath lately fallen upon a youngster of surprising talent as a painter, a stranger in Florence, of no great influence, and utterly unknown to fame. He hath as yet no great opinion of himself; make haste to secure him before others shall enlighten him as to his merits. This youth is called Raphael Santi, and I make sure that the pope will greatly prefer this silken dove to that porcupine Angelo.

"I would the more willingly see him advanced in some foreign city in that my good friend Cardinal Bibbiena seems desirous with all expedition to get him forth from Florence, and yet it is not so much from a desire to pleasure Bibbiena, as from a conviction that I have found here a tool of proper service to thee, that I thus recommend him to thy good offices.

"To conclude, my Bramante, make all speed to inform his Holiness that the walls of the Vatican are cracked, smoky, filthy, and disgraceful, and above all things fetch thy Raphael quickly and gain for him a personal interview; for I trust more to the charm of his presence than to volumes of thy bungling speech.

"And when thou hast need of further counsel, or seest that the pope desireth an Ahithophel,—now the

counsel of Ahithophel which he counselled in those days was as if a man had enquired at the oracle,—why send then and fetch thy ever loving and honest friend,

"MACCHIAVELLI.

"FLORENCE, October 12, 1504.

"*Maria Bibbiena to the Lady Alfonsina Orsini Medici, wife of Piero dei Medici, at Urbino:*

"FLORENCE, October 15, 1504.

"MOST MAGNIFICENT, MOST BELOVED, AND MOST SWEET LADY:

"Since I last made bold to write you of my small matters, others more weighty to me have transpired, which, as I have made a beginning, I will also make an end in the way of their narration. And first I have met with a small disquietness from your highness's brother-in-law, the Cardinal, concerning whose presence in Florence I had not heard. For yestreen, when I was playing upon my lute in the garden of the palaccio of your daughter, Madonna Strozzi, he came upon me suddenly walking with your daughter. Whereat he seemed at first taken all aback, but the Lady Maddalena exclaimed, 'A new Petrarch, and new Laura,' and commanded him on his fame as a scholar to make some rhymes on that subject. Whereat he replied that if I would continue playing he would write, as his patron, St. Cupid, gave him utterance, and with that he improvised and wrote out the nonsense herewith following:

"In all Avignon's gardens the nightingales were mute
As at her open casement she played upon her lute.
The lonely scholar Petrarch wandered all listlessly; [me.
'The old man with the hour-glass has sure some grudge 'gainst
The sands they fall so sluggishly that tell the flight of time;
My studies all are tedium, and weariness my rhyme.'

'Twas then the Lady Laura, with lips like ripened fruit,
And lily-petalled fingers, full sweetly touched the lute.
The lonely Petrarch listened, as she sang, so sweet and low,
A soft love-laden sonnet, writ by Boccaccio.
Till Cupid snatched the hour-glass from loitering Father Time,
And Petrarch's life was all too short to tell his love in rhyme.

"After the reading, our lady daughter would have me crown the poet, but this I would in no manner consent unto. Nay, I even flung down my lute in vexation of spirit, and ran away to another part of the garden. But I gained nothing thereby, for Giovanni pursued after me and came up with me at the fountain, where he caught my hand and would in no wise restore my freedom till he had delivered his mind of what lay thereon, namely, that he sought me for his wife. Whereupon I told him very plainly that I knew that he had been bred up for the Church, and that it were disloyalty to his brother, your highness's husband, and to his nephew, your son Lorenzo, for him to think of marriage and a worldly life, for by so doing the Medici interest would be divided. But he said that if I would but be his wife he would relinquish all claim to political power and Lorenzo should not fear for his succession, for he would go with me to dwell in foreign parts. And while I sought in the corners of my mind for some answer which should convince him of my utter lothness, and yet not offend so noble a gentleman, came suddenly your daughter to warn him that others were entering the garden; but ere he went he kissed a rose and tossed it to me saying, 'This rose comes not from Giovanni the Cardinal, but Giovanni the soldier, for henceforth go I to fight the French and to win my bride.'

"Scarcely was he gone than I tore the rose in pieces, wroth that I had been so tongue-tied in his presence.

And while I shred the petals all about me, I was aware of Raphael coming to meet me, and holding in his hand a lily such as we see in the pictures of the Virgin, which lily he placed in my hand, saying:

Sicut lilium inter spinas
Sic Maria inter filias.

"And as he saw me to tremble with the vexation and the disquiet of my interview with the gay cardinal, he most courteously and gently inquired the cause of my discomfort, and did so comfortably avail to assuage my distress that I presently forgot it. He told me also that since he had known me he had so grown into an affection for the name of Maria, that he had resolved to devote his life, in so far as choice should be vouchsafed him, to the painting of Maria Sanctissima. And many other things he said which it is not meet nor proper that I should write out here. Suffice it that you, who love your dear lord, can well understand my present joyful state, and why it is that the nuns, singing now the canticle for the Feast of the Purification in the convent next to the palazzo, seem to be addressing their song to me:

Gaude, virgo gloriosa!
Super omnes speciosa!

"For happiest of all Virgins is thy little

"MARIA.

"It was this last letter which broke my heart, and yet did not so much break as bend it so that I gave up the hope which I could no longer keep not in bitterness or in wrath, and resigned myself to my destiny as monk and pope; when Maria Bibbiena died, all too

early, I wept not my own shattered future alone, but Raphael's as well, and so took him to my heart, though he knew not the reason, and so I beseech the efficacious prayers of all Christians for all true lovers.

"*Et pro nobis Christum Exora.*

"GIOVANNI DE' MEDICI,

"*The Ghost of the Cabinet.*"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MYSTERY DISCLOSED.

WINNIE'S romance of the cabinet pleased us all, but Adelaide was sure that Madame would not allow it to be read without certain changes, especially the reference to the robbery in the school, and the "lovering" parts.

"You need not imagine," said Milly, "that because you object to lovering, all the rest of the world does. Why, even Miss Noakes has a softer heart than Adelaide's. But really and truly, Winnie, how much of that is true? Was Raphael really engaged?"

"Most certainly, my dear."

"And did Leo X love her too? You made me ever so sorry for the poor old pope."

"Well, no, that part is the only one for which I have no warrant in history. That is, I have no doubt that Leo X really did love some one before he took the irrevocable vows. He was what Browning calls

"Sworn fast and tonsured pate, plain heaven's celibate,
And yet earth's clear accepted servitor,
A courtly, spiritual Cupid,
And fit companion for the like of you;
Your gay Abati with the well turned leg,
And rose i' the hat rim. Canon's cross at neck,
And silk mask in the pocket of the gown."

"The cabinet is such an uncanny old thing," said Milly, "that I begin almost to believe that you have divined the truth, and that an uneasy spirit really haunts its vicinity."

"Perhaps the fact that we now only keep school books in the cabinet is the reason the ghost has been so very quiet of late," said Winnie. "Or, perhaps it has repented its evil deeds and my essay has given it the peace of conscience which only comes through confession. If it were an unrepenting spirit it would, as Milly suggests, be very unwilling

that I should publish its evil deeds by reading this essay. I believe that I will give it an opportunity of showing whether it approves of my reading its confessions. Here, Tib, take everything else off your shelf, and I will lay my essay there and call on the spirit to make away with it, if, indeed, he is able and wicked enough to do it."

Adelaide, Milly, and I watched the incantation with much amusement.

"Guilty ghost," exclaimed Winnie, striking an attitude, "if you have repented of your crimes, and the reading of this essay will allow you henceforth to rest in peace, I hereby exorcise you, and command you to affix some seal of your approval to this paper—either the print of a bloody hand or at least X your mark." Hereupon Winnie, with a flourish, laid her essay on my shelf and closed the cabinet door. "If, guilty ghost," she continued, "you are still up to your tricks, and having taken the money which Tib confided to her shelf, are determined to go on in your evil ways, I hereby dare you to steal that essay within the next half hour, we keeping watch and ward in this room!"

"I think it is no fair test," I said, "unless you leave it there overnight. Both of the

other robberies were committed just at midnight. This ghost may be of a bashful disposition, or possibly not good-natured enough to walk at your call in broad daylight."

"Well, if he doesn't appear within a half hour I'll give him another chance, 'in the dead vast and middle of the night,' 'when churchyards yawn,' et-cetera. Here, Milly, lend me your watch, that I may time our visitor."

We all sat for a few moments silently watching the cabinet, but presently Adelaide tired of this mummery and exclaimed:

"Really, this is too absurd! I have my Latin prose composition to write, and cannot spend any more time in such nonsense, Winnie."

"Write your exercise in this room. We will all keep still, and I must have all the Amen Corner as witnesses of my little experiment."

Winnie pulled out the writing shelf, and Adelaide seated herself at the cabinet and wrote steadily until Winnie cried, "Time's up."

Milly and I approached the cabinet, and Winnie made a few magical passes in the air and repeated an ancient hocus-pocus:

"There was a frog lived in a well,
To a rigstram boney mite kimeo.
And Mistress Mouse she kept the mill,
To a karro karro, delto karro,
Rigstram pummiddle arry boney rigstram
Rigstram boney mitte kimeo,
Keemo kimo darrow wa,
Munri, munro, munrum stump,
Pummididle, nip cat periwinkle,
Sing song, kitchee wunchee kimeo."

Adelaide pushed in the writing shelf and stepped aside, and Winnie threw open the cabinet door. We could hardly believe our eyes—the essay had disappeared.

Milly gave a shriek of dismay. "It must have been a ghost. How else could it have vanished with all of us on the watch?"

"Have you been playing a trick on me, Adelaide?" Winnie asked. "Did you manage to slip it out while we were not looking?"

Adelaide disclaimed any such action, and Milly and I confirmed her assertion, for we had been watching the door all the time.

Winnie wheeled the cabinet away from the wall, almost expecting to find a concealed door opening into Cynthia's room. But the wall was perfectly solid, there was not even a mouse hole in the base-board, while the back

of the cabinet was not a sliding panel. We banged it, and pushed it, and examined it with a magnifying glass for concealed springs or hinges. It was simply an honest piece of work, a secure, heavy back, conspicuously fastened in its place with wooden pegs, a construction to which cabinet makers give the term dowelling, and to make assurance doubly sure, the edges had been glued with a cement which had turned black with age, but had not cracked. There was no possible way in which the cabinet could have been opened from behind.

"There goes my pet theory," said Winnie, in an aggrieved tone. "It would have been just like Cynthia to have removed things from the back of the cabinet, if we could only have discovered a concealed door in the partition behind it. You see the cabinet backs so conveniently against her room."

But there was no possibility of any door having ever existed here. The partition wall was not of boards, which might have been sawed through and removed. It was clean white plaster which had never been papered, and would have betrayed the least scratch, and Winnie was obliged to relinquish this romantic method of access to the cabinet.

"I shall always think," said Adelaide, "that the first robbery was committed by that individual we saw through the studio transom in Professor Waite's great Rembrandt hat."

Winnie laughed heartily. "Girls, I may as well confess," she exclaimed, "that was your humble servant."

"You, Winnie?"

"Yes, I, Winnie. Don't you remember that I was not in the parlor when the head appeared? I was in the studio, and it struck me that it would be rather a good joke to pretend to be Professor Waite, tramping up and down before that door, tormented by a consuming passion for Adelaide. Wait, I will put the hat on again and let you see." Winnie dashed into the studio and returned wearing the Rembrandt hat, and we all laughed at her cavalier appearance.

"But, girls," she exclaimed, throwing the hat on the floor, "this is really no laughing matter. Do you realize that my essay is gone? My essay that I am to read next week. And how I am ever to find time to write it over again, with examinations and all that I have to do between now and then, is more than I know. Just see how wickedly Giovanni de' Medici leers at me!" and Winnie pointed to

the carved head which adorned the centre of the cabinet door. "Oh! what shall I do? what shall I do?"

Winnie soon answered that question for herself, by writing another essay, and improving it in the process. But the disappearance of the Florentine letters was a nine days' wonder. We searched the room thoroughly and even stepped out on the fire-escape and looked up and down for some bird of heaven that might have carried them away. "I shall always maintain," said Milly, "that it is no real thief at all. Of course, none of us really believe in the ghost theory, though it is almost enough to make one turn spiritualist to be made the victim of such a trick. I believe that in the end it will be found that somebody's little pet poodle has found his way in here, and like Old Mother Hubbard's dog has a weakness for cupboards, and has chewed up everything that he has found. Sometime Nemesis will overtake that little poodle and he will be laid upon the dissecting table, and all of the money and Winnie's essay will be found in his little gizzard."

It was an absurd suggestion, but nothing seemed to explain the mystery, and we finally all gave it up. All but Winnie. She con-

tinued to worry about it. She laid many traps for her ghost, baiting them with edibles under the supposition that the thief might be an animal; and with money, tying silken threads around the cabinet, fastening the handle of the door to a bell in her own room, but they were all unavailing; the robber came no more.

The cadets' prize declamation came before our graduation, and we all attended the exercises.

Stacey did not take a prize, but, as he laughingly told Milly, his coat did, and that was honour enough.

Woodpecker was the honour man that day, and as Woodpecker was a poor man's son, he had no dress suit, and Stacey lent him his coat to appear in while he delivered his oration—Stacey sitting in his shirt sleeves behind the scenes meantime. Woodpecker's long arms soared and the stitches in the back cracked, but he spoke with fire, and the committee unanimously awarded his "Description of a Chariot Race" the first prize, while Buttertub's sonorous voice and grandiloquent manner secured the second for his "Philosophy of Socrates," and Stacey's "Athletic Games of Greece" came off with an "honour-

able mention" only. There was a good deal of what Jim called "kicking" at this decision. The drum corps, to a man, felt that Stacey ought to have had the first prize, and there was not a boy in the school, not excepting Buttertub, who did not think Stacey's essay infinitely more entertaining than the Socratic philosophy. The Commodore, fortunately, was of this opinion. Stacey's stock had risen rapidly in his father's estimate. The essay interested the Commodore, and it made no difference to him that the committee did not agree with him; in his opinion Stacey was the brightest boy in the school. We girls shared this feeling. Stacey's bouquets proclaimed him the most popular fellow in the class. The usher kept bringing them up, and it was impossible for Stacey to carry all his floral tributes from the stage at one time.

Woodpecker enjoyed the popularity of his friend more than his own honors. He had laid a wager with Ricos that Stacey would carry off the first prize, promising that if he did not, he, Woodpecker, would trundle a wheelbarrow down Fifth Avenue. Having lost the wager by his own triumph Woodpecker gaily proceeded to pay the penalty by carrying Stacey's bouquets in a light wheel-

barrow to the Buckingham Hotel — where Commodore and Mrs. Fitz Simmons had taken rooms—immediately after the exercises.

Stacey himself did not overestimate this expression of his friend's regard, but it helped soften his disappointment at not obtaining the first prize. He was not embittered as at his failure at the games, but humbled in a salutary way. He saw his true position: a talented fellow, who until recently had not tried to make the best use of his opportunities, and who could not reasonably hope for the highest rewards after such brief effort. But something within him whispered, "You can do it yet. You can be something more than a dude and a good fellow," and he resolved to devote his vacation to serious training in his studies.

It gave him a thrill of pleasure, strangely mingled with humility, to see the Commodore's delight, just as he was handing Mrs. Fitz Simmons into the carriage, at hearing the old cry from the drum corps, who had been lined up in front of the barracks by Buttertub for that purpose, and gave it with a will—Jim's shrill voice joining in the final cheer:

"Who's Fitz Simmons?"

"First in peace, first in war,
He'll be there again, as he's been there before,
First in the hearts of his own drum corps,
That's Fitz Simmons!"

The Roseveldts were coming down the steps, and Milly heard it too, and waved her handkerchief, and Stacey opened the carriage door and waved his hat to her—though the drum corps thought it was in acknowledgment of their salute, and closing round Woodpecker and his wheelbarrow escorted him down the Avenue.

There were tears in Mrs. Fitz Simmons's eyes as she pressed her husband's hand, and the Commodore, not wishing to show his satisfaction too plainly, asked who that pretty girl was who waved her handkerchief so enthusiastically.

"You don't deserve it, you young dog," he asserted. "Now if she had smiled in that way at me I would have cared more for it than for all the hullabaloo those young rascals are making."

"Perhaps I do," was the reply on Stacey's lips, but it was uttered so quietly that only his mother heard it, and understood as mothers always do.

And then through the days that followed, Stacey buckled down to hard work again, and won, as such work is sure to win, its reward.

"Passed his examinations, admitted to Harvard! Why, of course," said the Commodore. "There never was any doubt of it." But Stacey knew that there had been great doubt, and that the expression of esteem by which he was held by his classmates, which had pleased his father so much, was a very slight thing compared to this quiet victory, gained through hours of unregarded toil and for which no cheers were shouted or flowers borne after him in noisy triumph.

The opening of the college gates was the entering of a better race for Stacey. He felt that he was now indeed a man, and must put away childish things.

We of the Amen Corner had been chatting together, the evening before our commencement, of what we intended to do during vacation. "First of all," said Adelaide, "I want some home life. I want to get acquainted with my own mother. I feel now that we can be companionable. I am not very learned, it is true, but I am certainly more mature than when we were together last. I ought to be not only a help to her, but a sort of comrade.

She has kept herself young at heart, and her society will recompense me in part for the loss of yours. We are going to study music seriously together. She plays my accompaniments very nicely. Indeed, I think she has more talent than I have, only she is out of practice, and her repertoire is a little old-fashioned, but it will be very easy for her to put herself in touch with modern requirements. Then father has planned a delightful occupation for me. You know how fond I am of practical architecture. Well, he has purchased a delightful old colonial mansion in Deerfield, a charming village in western Massachusetts. It is an old homestead which has fallen into disrepair from having been long unoccupied, for the family which once inhabited it have all died. The one distant relative who owns the place lives in the West, and has sold it to father. I am to have the direction of all the repairs and restorations, and I mean to truly restore the old house to its original condition. We will board in the village while the changes are being made. It will be just the place for Jim to grow strong in. Father writes that it has the loveliest elm-shaded street, and a hundred different drives over the hills and along its three rivers."

"You need not tell us anything about Deerfield," Winnie interrupted. "Tib and I drove through the old town on our coaching trip. It is the most charming spot that I ever saw. I congratulate you on having such a delightful prospect before you."

"And I hereby invite you all to come to the hanging of the crane when my restorations are finished," Adelaide continued cordially. "That will be in September, I think, for they will take all summer at least, and you've no idea how I shall enjoy planning everything and directing the workmen. Jim and I are going to carve some of the woodwork ourselves. We will have a portico like that at Mount Vernon, with Ionic columns, and the windows will have tiny panes and broad seats, and there are to be china closets with glass doors, and fan work carved over the mantelpieces, and a raftered ceiling with a great 'summer-tree' in the 'keeping room.' I shall enjoy it more than I can make you understand. I don't mean so much the possession of the house when it is done, as altering it, for I love architecture, and wish I could be an architect. So much for my plans. What are yours, Tib?"

"Work," I replied; "solid work."

"I knew you would say that," Adelaide answered. "I have felt dissatisfied all this year with Madame's course of instruction. If it were not that I really must see my mother and have some home life, I would go to Bryn Mawr. I positively crave some good solid study. Madame's curriculum makes me think of the course of study Aurora Leigh pursued." Adelaide took down her favourite blue and gold volume from its companions in the "poets' corner,"—a set of shelves,—and read with comments:

"I learnt a little algebra, a little
Of the mathematics; brushed with extreme flounce
The circle of the sciences, because
She misliked women who are frivolous.
I learnt: The internal laws
Of the Burmese Empire; by how many feet
Mount Chimborazo outsoars Himmeleh.
I learnt much music, such as would have been
As quite impossible in Johnson's day
As still it might be wished—fine sleights of hand
And unimagined fingering, shuffling off
The hearers' soul through hurricanes of notes
To a noisy Tophet.

"And here you are, Tib.

"And I drew costumes
From French engravings, nereides neatly draped,
With smirks of simpering godship. I washed in

From nature, landscapes (rather say washed out),
Spun glass, stuffed birds, and modelled flowers in wax,
Because she liked accomplishments in girls."

"No," I interrupted, "I will not have you malign Professor Waite. "His teaching at least has been thorough, and I feel that I have received very valuable training in my art."

"Then I suppose that by solid work you mean that you will devote yourself to art this summer, and camp under a sketching umbrella in front of every picturesque nook you can find."

"Art will have to wait until winter," I replied. "I mean that I shall cook for the farm hands during haying season, and let mother go off for a visit to her sisters in Northfield, where she can attend the Moody meetings, and I shall get all the preserving done before she returns, too."

"You are just lovely, Tib," Milly replied, giving me a hug. "And now won't you be surprised when you hear what I am going to do. Father says he is going to superintend my education for a while. He sent me a squib from one of the papers about the sweet girl graduate;

'She talks with tears about her mates and quotes from ancient lore.
She says the Past is left behind, the Future is before.
Her gown is simply stunning, but she can't subtract or add,
Oh, what an awful humbug is the Sweet Girl Grad!'

Father is going through practical business arithmetic with me, and says he means to teach me how to take care of money, and even fit me to take a position in his bank."

"I pity your father," said Winnie. "But seriously, Milly, it is the best thing you could do."

"There is something else," Milly said, with a painful blush, "which father says is the foundation of business, and in which I have already had one lesson, and that is honesty. He says that all the sad failures, embezzlements, and defalcations come from borrowing money that does not belong to one—using money for one purpose that was intended for another; and he means to go over a great many such cases with me to show me on what a terrible precipice I have been playing. But indeed he need not say another word, for I have been severely punished, and I think I would rather put my hand into fire than go

into debt one dollar, or spend a penny for marsh-mellows that father had given me for chocolate creams."

Winnie turned and kissed Milly. "I would trust you with millions," she said; "but Adelaide is the only one in the Corner who knows anything about business."

"I am sure, Winnie," I replied, "that the way you have managed the Home finances disproves that modest assertion. What are you going to do during the summer?"

"I have no mother, you know," Winnie said gravely, "but I am going to my father, and shall try to make his life a little less lonely for him. He writes that his eyes have been troubling him. Perhaps he can dictate to me and I can be his amanuensis. I shall take my paint-box with me, and mean to daub a little all summer. Professor Waite has no faith in my genius, but I intend to astonish that gentleman one of these days. He admits that I have an eye for colour, and the rest can be learned. If father can spare me for a week I shall accept your invitation, Adelaide, and when I appear you must give me the interior of a room to decorate. It will be startling, I tell you. I have a good deal of King's Daughter work to do, too.

You know we have not raised the money for the Manger, and the Home must have it, for they have been receiving the babies, though they have no good nursery. Now in the summer we all do more or less fancy work, and I am going to write to all the circles of King's Daughters with whom we are in correspondence, and ask them to work for a fair, which we will hold in New York in the autumn. I have had a talk with Madame and she favors the idea. She even suggested that each circle should be invited to send a delegate who should assist in selling the articles at the tables, and very generously offered to entertain them here for three days during the continuance of the fair. You see, the school is never full at the beginning of the term, and perhaps she thinks it will be a good advertisement of her institution, to have girls from all over the county meet here, though there is really no need of imputing such mercenary motives to her. I have spoken about it at the Home to Emma Jane, and she will see that the proposition is made at the next meeting of the Board of Managers."

"Well, you certainly have your hands full," Milly remarked, "but I think I can help you after our tennis tournament is over. I will

get the girls at the Pier to make fancy work for you if I can get any time from my arithmetic. Where will you hold the fair?"

"I haven't planned as far as that."

"I think the new armory at the barracks will be a splendid place," Milly suggested. "I will get Stacey to ask Colonel Grey if we can use it, and then perhaps the cadets will be interested to do something to assist in the entertainment. They might act a play or furnish the music at least."

"I will drum up the two circles of King's Daughters at Scup Harbor," I said, "and we will have a useful table, with holders and aprons and dish-wipers; pickles, honey, butter, and preserves. Why, certainly, home-made preserves. While I'm about it this summer I will make you some currant jelly and pickled peaches."

"You had better paint something," Adelaide said; "and you must take charge of the art department."

"If I can come to town," I said. "And I will start the movement before I go by asking Professor Waite to get contributions from his artist friends before he goes abroad."

"I have been greatly touched by one thing," said Winnie. "The interest which the Ter-

willigers have taken in this scheme. I happened to mention it to Polo, and the entire family have risen to the occasion. Mrs. Terwilliger sent word that she wouldn't consider it too much if she worked for us to her dying day, considering the way her young ones had been 'done for' while she was sick. She has been collecting scraps of silk for a long time past to make a crazy quilt, and she intends to donate it to us. I fear me it will be a horror; but it shows her good-will all the same. Terwilliger, the trainer, says he means to collect sticks from noted places during Mr. Van Silver's coaching tour, to be made into canes and other souvenirs for us. Polo will not have time to work for the fair, for she must sew with Miss Billings this summer. I wish she could go to the country instead."

"I am going to invite her to Deerfield for August," said Adelaide. "The Home children ought to be able to do something for the fair. Have you thought of them, Winnie?"

"Emma Jane will see that they manufacture a quantity of little articles in their sewing class," Winnie replied. "They can hem towels and make bibs and bags and useful articles. I am really sorry that we cannot have the reception at the Home, for I would

like to have people see those nice fat babies."

"They shall see them," Milly replied. "I've an idea. We will devote one afternoon at the fair to a baby show. Do you remember the bicycle drill? Well, I will get Stacey to lend me his artillery tactics, and I will get up some manœuvres with baby carriages. We will call it the infantry brigade. The older children shall wheel the carriages. I will drill them without the babies at first. And then we will have them well strapped in, and then there will be a triumphal procession by twos and fours, and I'll deploy them in line and draw them up in a hollow square, and make them 'present arms,' and 'carry' and 'shoulder arms,' and double quick and charge. It will be lots of fun; and one baby carriage shall have a flag fastened to it, for that baby must be the colour bearer, and we'll have music, of course, and medals for all the babies. Then when people see what a lot of children we have, with no annex to put them in, they will rise to the occasion and contribute." *

* The Messiah Home for Children, 4 Rutherford Place, New York City, the actual analogue of the Home in which the girls of the Amen Corner was interested, is

"I think something of the kind might really be arranged," Winnie replied. "The Hornets are sure to be equally fertile in expedients. I foresee that the plan will be a great success, and it has one admirable feature—it will reunite us all in New York next winter for a week at least, and I wonder what will happen after that."

"I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me,"

said Adelaide softly, quoting from "Lead, Kindly Light," her favorite hymn. There was something strangely vibrant in her tone. I knew without looking that Adelaide was on the point of tears, but I was at a loss to understand the reason.

The rest of us had had our fits of hysterical weeping at the idea of parting from one another, but Adelaide was always so superior

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greatly assisted in its good work by circles of King's Daughters in different parts of the United States. These circles intend to unite in a fair to be given in New York City immediately before the holidays, and they invite other circles of King's Daughters, and any nimble-fingered, warm-hearted girl to whom this greeting may come, to aid them in this enterprise. Any donations may be sent to the Home in care of the matron, Miss Weaver.

to any weakness of that sort. What could be the matter?

Our great, last school day, so paradoxically called commencement, came at last. The exercises were in the evening, and we of the Amen Corner and many others of the girls would not leave the school until the following morning.

We received our diplomas in the school chapel, which had been beautifully decorated for the occasion. Buttertub's father, who was a friend of Madame's, addressed us at some length as we stood before him on the platform. I remember that Adelaide never looked more peerless, nor Milly more bewitching; and that Winnie, mischievous as ever, found a rose bug on her bouquet and could not forbear dropping it on Commodore Fitz Simmons's bald head. The Commodore was in full uniform and had been shown to a front seat just beneath the platform. I think Winnie really meant to snap the rose bug at Stacey, but the projectile fell short of its aim. Then the sweet girl graduates in clouds of mull and chiffon, drifted into the school parlours, and there was a reception, and Adelaide and Milly were besieged by battalions of friends, but I was quite lonely and awkward,

and held my bouquet and rolled diploma stiffly, until Winnie caught me about the waist and whirled me off for a little dance, for Madame had permitted this. After the dance there were refreshments in the dining-room, and we all went down, with the exception of Adelaide, who was on the reception committee, and had been stationed in the front parlour to receive any tardy guest. I met Professor Waite bringing up an ice as I went down the stairs, and Milly drew me into a corner, her eyes dancing with mischief as I entered the supper-room.

"Something is going to happen," she said to me mysteriously. "I have given Professor Waite his opportunity, and if he doesn't seize it and propose I shall never forgive him. I saw him moving around here, looking bored to death, and I asked him to please take an ice to Adelaide, who, I happened to mention, was all alone in the parlour. He seized the idea and the ice simultaneously. I saw resolve in his eye, and now we must keep people down here as long as we can."

"What shall we do with Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong and Jim?" I asked. "They are all so proud of Adelaide they will be with her in a moment."

"Winnie is in the plot and has special care of them. Jim thinks there never was quite so jolly a girl as Winnie. They are discussing the cabinet now. Mrs. Armstrong thinks that some one of us may be a somnambulist and have hidden the things in our sleep."

"What a strategic little girl you are, Milly! What made you think of this opportunity for Professor Waite?"

"Oh! that was the way Stacey found his chance, you know. Speak of angels—— How nice of you, Stacey, to bring me that salad. I am positively dying for something to eat. Wasn't the Bishop too longsome for anything? I thought I should expire, and I was wild to get across the stage at Winnie, whose back hair was coming down. No, I shall not tell you what we were saying about you. Do get me some chicken salad. I can't endure lobster;" and as the obedient Stacey ambled briskly away, Milly confided to me: "Do you know, Tib, Adelaide is beginning to care for Professor Waite? What makes me think so? Oh, I know the symptoms. She was packing so late last night that I nearly fell asleep, but not quite, for just as I was dozing off I saw her drop on her knees before her trunk with her face in a great white

handkerchief, and while I was wondering where she ever got such a great sheet of a thing, it suddenly dawned upon me that it was the silk muffler which Professor Waite wrapped around her burned hands the night of our Halloween scrape. Suddenly it seemed to occur to her that I might be looking, and she turned to look at me, but I had my eyes shut and was snoring like an angel. Of course angels snore, Stacey Fitz Simmons. Did you ever catch an angel asleep? and if not what right have you to make fun of me? Dear me, there is the Bishop starting to go upstairs, and they don't need him a bit—as yet."

Milly darted across the room, planted herself squarely in the Bishop's way, and exerted her powers of entertainment to such effect that Stacey became blindly jealous, though Buttertub had not come with his father, apparently having had quite enough of Madame's young ladies and their entertainments.

And meantime, how was Professor Waite thriving with his wooing? Adelaide told me long afterward, so long that it was too late for any word of mine to set all right, and filled my heart with pity, not alone for the Professor, but, alas! for Adelaide also.

Professor Waite offered her the ice, which she took and thanked him very sweetly, though he had dripped it awkwardly upon her dress. Then, as Adelaide began to eat it, he inconsistently took it away from her, saying, "Don't eat now, I have something important to say to you, and I want your entire attention."

"Oh! certainly. What is it?" Adelaide replied, knowing exactly what he wished to say, and determined to prevent his saying it.

"Miss Adelaide, I began to say what was on my mind last Halloween——"

"Oh! yes, and pardon me for interrupting you, but you remind me that I must return your muffler, which I have kept all this time. I will get it now," and Adelaide tried to slip by him and out of the door.

"No, you must not get it now," the Professor exclaimed, barring her way with his extended hand in which he still held the dish of ice-cream. "I must speak to you, Miss Adelaide. I may never have another opportunity."

"In that case do set down that ice-cream, for you are spilling it over everything."

The Professor obeyed her.

"See," she added pathetically, "you have nearly ruined the front of my gown——"

"But that is nothing," he asserted, "and

you must not try to divert me from my purpose by calling my attention to such a trifle. These little subterfuges are unworthy of you, Adelaide. You know what it is that I wish to say and you must hear me."

Thus driven into a corner Adelaide looked him squarely in the eyes, and braced herself for the attack.

"You know that I love you, Adelaide?"

"Yes, I know it."

"That I have loved you from the first moment that I saw you—desperately, hopelessly?"

"Thank you for saying that, Professor Waite; it would have been wicked in me to have given you hope. I never meant to do so. I am glad that you have not misunderstood me. And since you give me credit for not encouraging you, rather for striving to keep you from this avowal, why have you spoken? I would so gladly have spared you the pain, the humiliation of a refusal."

"You have not allowed me to finish what I was saying. I loved you at first hopelessly for I saw that you scorned me; but lately you have not scorned me. You have pitied me; you have been very kind and considerate; your manner has wholly changed, and I believed that your feelings had changed also."

Something in Adelaide's honest eyes flamed up as he spoke. She could not even look a lie, though she tried hard to do so.

"I am right," he cried triumphantly, "you have changed! You love me? Adelaide, you love me!"

His arms were almost about her, but she kept him off.

"It is impossible, Professor Waite. It can never be," she replied solemnly.

"Never is a long day. I will not urge you, or hasten you. I will be patient and wait, for you have changed, and you will love me wholly by and by. It is our destiny. God meant us for each other. I cannot

> Make thee glorious by my pen
> And famous by my sword,

but I can do it with my brush, and I will spend my life painting you, Adelaide. Art and Love! It is too much for mortal man to possess and live."

"Be content with art," Adelaide replied gently. "It is a great gift, and must console you, for I cannot be your wife."

"Cannot? Why not?"

"I will tell you. You think you love me, but it will pass. I regard you very highly,

but not above duty. The feeling which I have for you, Professor Waite, cannot be love, since it is perfectly easy for me now to give you up——"

"No," he assented; "if that is true you do not love me."

"Listen! the reason that it is easy for me, is not that I do not respect and admire you; not that I am not grateful to you, and do not suffer in giving you pain; not that I might not come to care still more for you, but because I know that a far tenderer heart than mine is wholly yours; that some one else, who richly deserves your affection, loves you with an utter self-abnegation of which I am incapable——"

"I know of whom you speak," he cried impatiently, "but she is a child, and will outgrow this fancy. God knows that I am innocent, Adelaide, of having ever deluded her foolish little heart."

"All too innocent; you might have treated her more kindly!"

"What! when I can never love her?"

"Never is a long day. You have said so. You are going away. Try to forget me and to love her, and when you return again two years hence to America——"

"When I return she will be married; she will, at least, have outgrown this silly dream."

Adelaide shook her head. "Promise me that you will do as I ask; that you will go and ask her when you come again."

"And if she refuses me, as she certainly will, may I come to you for the reward of my obedience?"

Again the tell-tale light flashed in Adelaide's eyes, but she only said: "She will not refuse you." And in the hall Milly's voice was heard in a high key, with the best of intentions, announcing the return of the guests from the dining-room, as she replied to some banter of Stacey's:

"Indeed, Stacey Fitz Simmons, I never change my mind—never."

"Good-by," said Adelaide.

Professor Waite raised the *portière* for her to pass. "You are very cruel," he murmured.

"You will thank me for this some day," she said, and the curtain of an impenetrable fate fell between them.

Milly seized my arm a few moments later. "I don't understand it at all," she said, "but Adelaide has certainly refused Professor Waite. I met him just now in the hall, and he glared at me like a maniac. I was posi-

tively afraid of him. I ran in to speak to Adelaide, but others had entered before me, and she only took my hand and squeezed it tight, while she talked with the Bishop. And Tib, she was as white as a sheet."

While making allowances for Milly's exaggerations, it seemed probable to me that her deductions were correct. Something unusual had happened, for when we went to our rooms we found that Adelaide had already retired for the night, and had taken Cynthia's empty room, leaving a note for Milly saying that she had a headache and would rather be alone.

If we had known, Milly and I, that Adelaide had put from her a love whose dearness she only realized after its sacrifice, we might have saved her years of heroic self-abnegation, and so have frustrated God's plan for making her a resolute, generous, and noble character.

But we did not know it, and the two girls who loved each other so dearly looked into each other's eyes at parting, and thought that they read each other's souls there, and yet misunderstood the reading as completely as if they had been utter strangers.

It was fortunate, shall we not say providential, that Adelaide occupied Cynthia's

room that night, and that she was so disturbed that she could not sleep? for toward morning she noticed a bright light shining through the transom over the door. Her first thought was that the thief was at work at the cabinet, and stealing cautiously from her bed she peered through the key-hole. There was no one near the cabinet, and throwing on a wrapper she softly opened the door. The room was vacant and the light which she had noticed streamed in from the window. On looking out what was her horror to see that the rear of the house was in flames. The fire had originated in the kitchen, and was making its way toward the front of the building. Her presence of mind did not desert her. She stepped to Milly's room, wakened her gently and told her what was the matter, and then her clear voice rang out, "Fire, fire!" as she hastened to Madame's room, sounding the telegraphic alarm in the corridor as she went. How differently people behave during a crisis like this! With the exception of Adelaide, I think we all lost our wits to a certain extent. Milly, although wakened so gently, was quite frightened out of hers. She dressed herself with extreme deliberation, heating her curling irons in the gas jet and crimping her bangs

very prettily. She put on one high-buttoned boot and one Louis Seize slipper, but was particular about her gloves—fastening every button—and came to me to be helped with her graduation dress, which laced in the back.

Winnie was also greatly excited. She donned a diminutive blazer tennis jacket over her nightgown, and seeming to consider herself in full dress, rushed off to awaken Miss Noakes, carrying a small pitcher of ice-water in her hand with which to help extinguish the fire. Having forcibly entered Miss Noakes's room, she emptied her pitcher in the face of that indignant woman. I was not much better. Possessed with the idea that I must save things, I dragged "the commissary" from under my bed, and filled it with an absurd collection of useless articles—old school books, empty pickle jars, the tidies from the chairs, all the soap from the wash-stand, a soap stone which my mother had insisted on my having as a remedy for cold feet; this I carefully wrapped in my flannel petticoat to avoid breakage. I then tossed in the globes from the gas fixtures, and finding that the cover of the trunk would not go down, sat upon it, crushing the frail glass globes to atoms. It

was at this juncture that Milly came out to have her dress laced, and I was so dazed that I obeyed her. Adelaide entered a few moments later, and, spreading a blanket on the floor, opened the door leading into the studio for the first time since our initial escapade of the school year. Her intensity of feeling gave her the strength required to push the heavy chest aside, and she hastily collected all of Professor Waite's sketches and studies, wrapped them in the blanket, and descended the turret stairs with them. Managing—how, she never knew—to burst open the door at the foot, and to carry the heavy package through the crowd which had now collected across the park to the Home of the Elder Brother, where Emma Jane received them. Winnie meantime had returned from her life-saving expedition, and assisted me in tumbling the commissary out of the window, following it with every other piece of furniture in the room. We had some difficulty with the cabinet, but finally our united efforts succeeded in toppling it over the balcony, narrowly missing crushing a fireman who was coming up the escape to order us to stop throwing out the furniture, as the fire had been extinguished.

"How provoking!" was Winnie's first exclamation. "All this excitement for nothing!" The fire had merely burned out the interior woodwork of the kitchen; but had it not been for Adelaide's prompt alarm, it was impossible to tell how much damage or even loss of life might have ensued. On ascertaining that there was no longer any danger, Adelaide attempted to carry back the pictures, but found herself quite unable to do so, and a procession of four of the Home boys was formed to bring them.

Adelaide begged us all to promise not to tell Professor Waite of her attempt to rescue his property, and as we were all very much mortified by our own absurd performances, we readily complied with her request.

It was late in the morning when we bethought ourselves of picking up our shattered property, which Winnie and I had tossed into the yard. Fortunately, our trunks of clothing had been so heavily packed that they had not shared this fate. We descended and viewed the heap of wreckage with dismay. Cerberus came out to aid us, and, removing the broken lounge and table, discovered the old oak cabinet an almost unrecognizable jumble of carved panels, for after it had fallen the

lounge had descended upon it with the force of a catapult.

Winnie and I picked up the panels, lamenting loudly over the mischief which we had done.

"No great harm, after all," said Adelaide consolingly. "The panels are only separated at the joints; the wood is so hard that they have not really broken," and then she gave a little cry: "Winnie, what does this mean? Here is your essay!"

"Has Giovanni de' Medici returned it?" I asked.

"It would seem so," Winnie replied, in great excitement. "See, girls, here is every bit of the stolen money! The ghost has kept his word, and has returned it after his confession was read publicly."

"Where did you find it?" I asked, utterly mystified.

"Right here, in the drawer to which we had lost the key, just under the upper part of the cabinet. You remember it has been locked since the very first day of school."

"But is the money all there?"

"Yes; your forty-seven dollars, and the sixty from the Catacomb Party for the Home."

"How did it ever come there?"

"That is what I am trying to find out. You know it is my mystery; and, girls, I have it! This sliding writing shelf which we pulled out to write upon is really the floor of the cabinet, on which Tib deposited her treasures. When you pull it out you rake everything upon it into the drawer below."

"It must be," said Adelaide, "that some one pulled out that writing shelf before each of those mysterious disappearances." And when we came to review the circumstances, we remembered that it had been so in every instance. The lost money and essay had simply been dropped into the drawer below. All that had seemed so inexplicable was now made plain, and in our very last hour together—for, as we carried the fragments around to the turret door, we saw that the express man had come for our trunks, and noticed the Roseveldt carriage waiting behind a hansom, which had just driven up to the main entrance. On the steps Madame was parting tenderly from Miss Noakes, who was in travelling costume, and Mr. Mudge sprang from the interior of the hansom to assist her to a place beside him. Catching sight of his well-known features, Winnie im-

pulsively waved the drawer of the cabinet and darted across the lawn.

"No wonder I could not discover the thief," he exclaimed testily, as Winnie showed the mechanism of the sliding shelf. "The cleverest detective could not have done that when there was no thief to discover. But, my dear young lady, pray do not detain us; Miss Noakes and I have a particular engagement for this very minute at the Church of the Blessed Unity." As he spoke he dodged an old shoe which the astute Polo projected from the studio window, and springing into the hansom drove rapidly away.

If there had been any doubt as to these indications we would have been fully enlightened on finding the announcement of their marriage in our next mail; but the truth was evident to all.

Madame listened to us with a smile. "It was kind of you, Winnie," she said, "not to solve your mystery earlier and so take away the excuse for Mr. Mudge's frequent calls."

"I shall have the dear old cabinet put in order again," Adelaide said, "and I shall keep your essay in the drawer, Winnie, for I shall always believe that you were right, and that there was a ghost."

And so with tears and embraces, and with vows never to forget, and to meet again, and to write often, the old delightful school life and Witch Winnie's Mystery came to an end together.

THE END.